Dissent

ON TERROR P1

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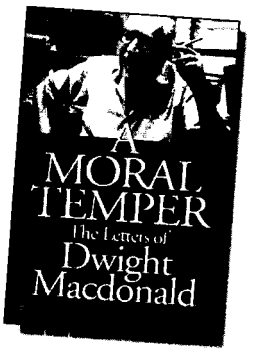
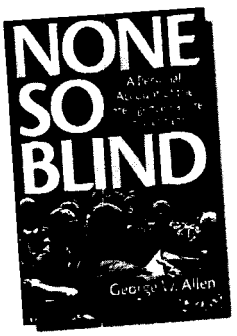
A Moral Temper

The Letters of Dwight Macdonald



A bountiful selection of letters from the correspondence of one of the most astute observers of American politics, society, and culture in the 20th century. "I find these letters to be remarkable. They are of historical value, entertaining, quirky, irritating, delightful, and illumined by the felicity of Dwight Macdonald's style. That allows one to follow his thought as it emerges from the point of his pen, which so often will pursue a more interesting conclusion than the one with which he began—a rare and happy faculty for a serious writer."—NORMAN MAILER.



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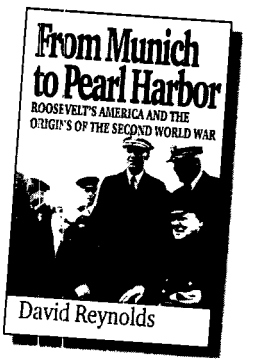

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TERROR

THIS IS A TIME to speak quietly and act carefully...firmly, inventively, boldly, but above all carefully. With all Americans, with decent people the world over, we mourn the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. By the time you read these words, more will be known than we know now about the number of the dead—probably also about the identity of their murderers. Perhaps the U.S. government will have mounted a military response. We can only write prospectively: how should we respond to this barbaric act?

The first thing to say is that there is no way to match the spectacle of the attack, and no good reason to try. A massive response might be theatrically appropriate; it won't be morally, politically, diplomatically, or even militarily appropriate. We need an anti-terrorism program that is measured and sustained over time. We need a program that is plausibly addressed to our real enemies, who do not have a street address or a central headquarters or an army or a capital city.

Who are they? They claim to act for the oppressed, against their oppressors; for the "South," against the "North"; for the world's poor, against the forces of global capitalism. All these claims are false. There are plenty of people in the world today who need a left politics, but terrorism is not that politics. It is not intended to be a left politics, and men and women on the left should actively repudiate apologists for terrorism—those who say, "Of course, it is wrong to kill the innocent, but you have to consider the frustration of these people..." No buts. Terrorists are parasitic on oppression; they are not friends of the oppressed.

These terrorists are a new kind of force. They represent the basest religious and political emotions. Doctrinally, they are reactionary, fundamentalist, repressive; they are hostile to liberal values and universal human rights. But they make brilliant use of the most advanced technologies and, despite their parochial commitments, they operate effectively in a global environment. They are organized in cells and networks, not in brigades and hierarchies. They make coordinated and sophisticated plans, but they don't need a Pentagon of their own to do that; a few basements, a few living rooms, with computers running, are enough. So terrorism has to be fought cell by cell: resolution and stamina are necessary; intelligence and police work, not military posturing.

Diplomacy is necessary too. This should not be America's war alone; we need a little help from our friends—even from our near-friends, political rivals, and economic competitors. We should work to assemble the largest possible coalition, so that states that provide refuge and support for the terrorist networks can be ostracized, embargoed, blockaded. In the immediate aftermath of September 11, political leaders around the world are pretending that terrorism has no supporters. In fact, it has supporters, and we should recite their names and rally nations, parties, movements, ordinary men and women, against them.

We have to defend our lives; we are also defending our way of life. Everyone says this, but it is true. The terrorists oppose and hate our way of life—and would still oppose and hate it even if we lived our lives far better than we do. It is critical, then, not to lose our way: the war against terrorism cannot be fought with terrorism of our own; *they* kill innocent people; *we* must not. The war cannot be allowed to compromise the liberties of American citizens and others within our borders. All of us must join together in resisting mob violence against scapegoated ethnic or religious minorities. And finally—this is critical too–this war cannot take the place of all our other wars: against poverty, hatred, and exploitation.

THE EDITORS

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Editor's Page

This is a big *Dissent*, partly because we are planning a special issue for Winter and could not hold articles over, partly because of an embarrassment of riches. Editors dream about this; I can't explain it, nor can I do justice to our authors on this short page. We feature Marshall Berman's essay on Times Square, a brilliant account of how urban space can, even if it mostly doesn't, foster human freedom and social equality. Nelson Lichtenstein reconsiders C. Wright Mills's first book, on the labor movement and its leaders. *New Men of Power* was mostly forgotten after the success of *The Power Elite*, which focused on a more likely group. But it is worth remembering now, as unions struggle for survival. Ulrich Beck continues our discussion of a topic sometimes neglected in the endless talk about economic globalization: what political regime, what distribution of power looms on the global horizon? ■ Among our many new writers, Amy D. Burke looks beyond the glowing reports of declining welfare rolls to the real meaning of "welfare reform." Manuel DeLanda provides our first account of the debate over property rights on the Internet (we will return to this issue). Kanti Bajpai reiterates for an American audience the arguments he has been making in India against the deployment of nuclear weapons. ■ But our chief focus this fall is on schools and students. Over many years, the left has written about and worked on education because the schools were taken to be one possible instrument of an egalitarian politics. Today they are pretty much the only instrument that is still in discussion. The idea of equality hardly arises anywhere except in arguments about educational policy. We shouldn't accept that restriction, but we should join the argument wherever it is going on. The pieces by Jennifer Hochschild, Norm Fruchter, Adolph Reed, Jr., Katie Terezakis, Monty Neill, Leo Casey, and Andrew Felton all address the question, What are the best ways of providing a decent start to children from different racial groups and social classes? ■ Schools are also important because they provide a relatively secure base for ideological debate and political action. The last years have brought a revival of student politics, and Rachel Neumann, Gordon Lafer, and Jeffrey C. Isaac (to whom Liza Featherstone responds) provide accounts and critiques of what is going on. What's going on isn't what went on in the sixties, though there are always people pretending to reenact the heady days of yesteryear. Mostly the activity is more practical, more local—organizing graduate students, defending campus wage workers, campaigning against university dealings with third world sweatshops. There are ideological justifications for all of this, as is only right, but most of these activities stop short of world-historical pretension. Which is also, right now, only right.

M.W.

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Mismanaging Globalization

Mark Levinson

Successive U.S. governments have relied on a simple catechism: the World Trade Organization equals free trade, which equals development. With this rationale the nation has been led into regional (NAFTA) and international (WTO) trade agreements. These so-called "free trade" agreements are in fact systems of protectionist rules—protecting the property of global investors while weakening the rights of governments to protect their workers, their public health, and their environment.

To oppose this kind of globalization is not to oppose globalization itself. *New York Times* globalization cheerleader Thomas Friedman, in a rare moment of balanced analysis, captured what the debate on globalization should be about: "[Globalization] has both empowering and enriching features and disempowering and impoverishing features, and it all depends on how you manage it. If you think globalization is all good or all bad, you don't get it."

So how are we managing globalization? Friedman is not much help in answering the question he posed. He has been too busy attacking those who question how globalization is being managed to shed much light on the issue himself. In fact, his silence is not unusual for supporters of the corporate version of globalization. For those corporations who are protected, globalization is being managed just fine. But millions of people around the world see it differently.

Public health is a stark example. Diseases that are under control in the developed world cause millions of premature deaths in the developing world. One of the main reasons is a group of WTO patent protection laws that have had a substantial impact on the price of drugs within the developing world where people's need for drugs is great and their ability to pay is not.

This is best illustrated by the HIV/AIDS crisis. An estimated thirty-six million people worldwide live with HIV—twenty-five million in Africa alone. Nineteen million people have died of AIDS, and 5.4 million are newly infected every year. Some estimates suggest that half a billion people will be infected with HIV by the year 2020. Other predictions are worse. Entire African nations are on the verge of collapse because teachers, military personnel, doctors, health care professionals, and civil servants are dying of AIDS.

Yet HIV is a treatable chronic disease. The mortality rate for the roughly four hundred thousand people with AIDS who live mainly in Europe and North America and who have access to patented anti-retroviral therapy has dropped by more than 70 percent. But this therapy costs about $10,000 per year for the drugs alone. In 1999, in Africa, if deaths had occurred at the much lower European or North American rates, more than 1.5 million fewer Africans would have died of AIDS. The reasons for these premature deaths are various—poor nutrition, inadequate water and sanitation, poor health infrastructure—but limited access to life-savings drugs is an important one. Affordability is one of the factors restricting access, and patent protection is a key factor influencing affordability.

Under the WTO rules, which took effect in 1995, all 142 WTO member states (and any future new members) are required to grant at least twenty-year patent protection (called Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights [TRIPS]) in all fields of technology, including drugs. TRIPS forces countries to relinquish their right to produce or import low-cost generic copies of otherwise patented drugs. If a country violates TRIPS, a complex

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and costly WTO dispute mechanism can be triggered. The potential penalty for noncompliance is trade sanctions against the offending country.

Before the WTO was established, most developing countries avoided stringent patent regimes on medicines in the interests of public health. Highly sophisticated generic industries emerged with a specialization in the development of low-cost equivalents of expensive patented medicines for low-income populations. Countries such as Brazil, India, Thailand, and Egypt succeeded not just in reducing their dependence on imported medicines, but also in developing their capacity to produce and export the same medicines. Across sub-Saharan Africa, most medicines used in the treatment of infectious diseases are imported from generic drug suppliers. These drugs are typically available at prices ranging from one-fifth to one-tenth of those for patented name products.

Because generic-drug makers are able to market products at a fraction of the costs associated with patented brands, they provide a lifeline for low-income households. The WTO agreement on intellectual property rights threatens to cut that lifeline. TRIPS is subject to certain public interest safeguards and exceptions, which some observers (mainly the drug companies and their apologists) regard as adequate. But the safeguards are ambiguous and difficult to administer—especially because of the threat of legal challenge and the use of the WTO dispute procedures.

Pharmaceutical corporations and some industrialized-country governments, especially the United States, have pressured developing countries not to invoke even these limited safeguards. The Clinton administration threatened Thailand and the Dominican Republic with trade sanctions because these countries were allowing the importation of cheap drugs. The pharmaceutical industry has also maintained a sophisticated lobbying campaign directed against countries that it regards as a special threat, notably India, Egypt, Argentina, and Brazil. These four countries have strong generic industries, which not only provide low-cost competition in domestic markets, but also export low-cost generic drugs to third world countries. In the two most publicized cases, the pharmaceutical industry sued South Africa when it amended its law to allow compulsory licensing of essential medicines, and the United States complained to the WTO about Brazil's lack of enforcement of patents. Both actions were withdrawn after worldwide campaigns and media criticism.

EXCEPT FOR THE limited cases where safeguard provisions can be utilized successfully, the new trade rules will delay the introduction of generics into the market. The inevitable effect in many poor countries will be higher prices for essential medicines. Products affected include many anti-HIV drugs and drugs for malaria, tuberculosis, and all of the other preventable or treatable diseases. Higher prices will restrict access to these important drugs and deepen the health divide between rich and poor countries.

The problem is that TRIPS has moved beyond the proper function of patents— providing reasonable rewards to inventors—to creating long-term monopolies in developing countries. Until 1995, every country, in framing its patent regime, was free to strike its own balance between encouraging innovation and maximizing the availability of affordable medicines to its populace. Many developing countries chose to use this freedom to exempt drugs from patenting or to grant only limited protection (for example. a maximum of five years or patents on processes but not products), thereby allowing low-price generic versions of new products to enter the market within a few years of launch of the original product. Indeed, many of today's rich countries did not grant patent protection during earlier stages of their development, choosing to wait first for the emergence of local pharmaceutical industries before enforcing patents in their own markets.

The pharmaceutical industry's main argument for patents is that they are necessary to finance research and development. But what matters is not the fact that drugs are costly to develop, but the rate of return on investment. The pharmaceutical industry achieved some of the highest profit margins in the corporate world before the new TRIPS regime. Operating profit in the industry is typically in the range of 20 percent to 23 percent, which sug-

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gests that weak patent regimes in developing countries have not, thus far, had an adverse effect on profitability. The fact that pharmaceutical corporations typically spend more than twice as much on marketing as they do on research and development raises questions about how much of the revenue from patents actually finds its way into socially beneficial research. The industry also tends to gloss over the existence of public funding for the development of products patented by private companies. Taxpayers and publicly funded institutions often play a key role in new discoveries with the pharmaceutical industry obtaining the patent and reaping the financial rewards. For example, the majority of anti-retrovirals, whose patents are now exclusively exercised by big pharmaceutical companies, were the result of research that was largely publicly funded. Public money in Europe and the United States developed the drugs, but the huge profits go to private companies that now exercise those patents exclusively.

Meanwhile tens of millions of people alive today and untold millions tomorrow will die of a treatable infectious disease, largely because patent protection makes drugs unaffordable. From both a political and moral perspective, this is an outrage.

When confronted with the implications of the policies they designed and carried out, U.S. policymakers now claim ignorance. "We all missed it," says Charlene Barshefsky, the U.S. trade representative during the Clinton administrations. "I didn't appreciate at all the extent to which our interpretation of South Africa's international property obligations were draconian."

A remarkable statement. Gunnar Myrdal once said, "Ignorance is seldom random, but instead highly opportunistic." The opportunistic element in this case derives from the fact that Barshefsky saw her job as carrying out the agenda of those who benefited from not examining too closely the reality that treats them so well.

The growing international concern about the public health implications of the TRIPS agreement has lead to what UN Secretary General Kofi Annan described as "a world wide revolt of public opinion." Despite the public outrage, one should not underestimate the power of the pharmaceutical industry. As I write in early August, the press reports that two top staff from the U.S. Trade Representative's office have resigned and are going to the pharmaceutical industry lobbying arm, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America. And the Bush administration, heavily backed by PHARMA, continues to support strong patent protections. In the treaty governing the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas , for example, the administration is pushing to include patent protection of more than twenty years and to incorporate even tighter restrictions than under TRIPS.

Meanwhile, at the *New York Times*, Thomas Friedman, bellwether for fashionable opinion about globalization, has been silent (not one column!) on one of the urgent issues of our times: global trade rules, written by and for the pharmaceutical industry, that are contributing to the deaths of millions. ●

MARK LEVINSON is the director of Research and Policy at the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE).

After the Attack

This issue of *Dissent* was in press when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked. Therefore, except for the editors' statement on page one, we were unable to respond. We invite our readers to visit our online salon (www.dissentmagazine.org) for current comment.

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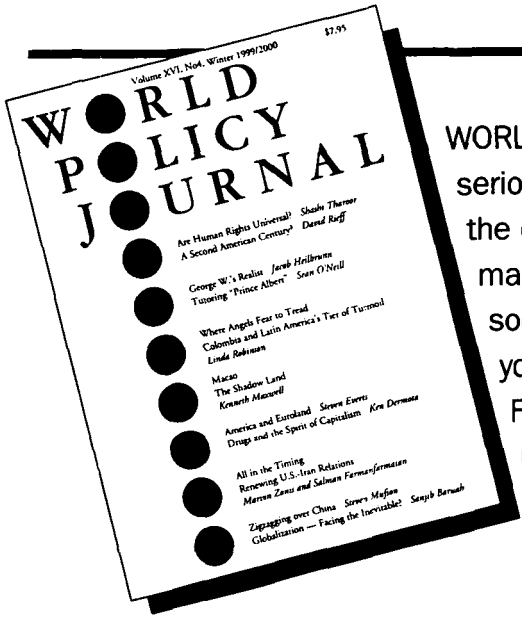
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The Subversion of Citizenship

Murray Hausknecht

THE 2000 ELECTIONS were marked by voter apathy, distrust of politicians, and a widespread cynicism that extended to the political process itself. A certain wariness of state power and those who wield it has been present throughout our history, but that is different from today's seemingly pervasive and persistent hostility to government and politicians. One way of understanding this state of affairs is to take conservative political rhetoric seriously and see how it reproduces and supports political alienation. George W. Bush's presidential campaign and his speeches as president provide excellent examples.

As in all campaigns, he appealed to voters' material interests and to the more intangible desire for "leadership." The former was to be satisfied by a tax cut and the second by his claim to be a "uniter not a divider." The promise of leadership was repeated in his inaugural address, which noted "differences so deep that we seem to share a continent, but not a country" and gave a "solemn pledge. . . to work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity." A typical campaign proposition on taxes was that "we're dealing with people's money, not the government's money, and I want to give people their money back." The contrast of the "people's money" with the "government's money" is part of a common political strategy; the culturally ingrained wariness of state power makes "the government" a tempting and easy target, even for someone who aims to head it.

For Bush, the burden of the charge is not that the government is ignoring the electorate's mandates, but that "the government" is an enemy of "the people." When he said early in the campaign, "I believe that after we meet priorities, all that remains must be passed back to Americans, so that it will not be spent by Washington," he was implying that the government commonly misappropriates the people's taxes. In this construction, "Washington" becomes a strange and alien place not to be confused with anything "American"; it is an autonomous entity serving only itself. The point was made more bluntly by Lawrence B. Lindsey, Bush's chief economic adviser and head of the National Economic Council, who told a reporter that for a conservative like himself, the greatest threat is "the overweening bureaucrat with the power of the state behind him who may be unchecked in his ability to tell someone how to run his life." In a Florida speech, after signing the new tax bill, Bush echoed Lindsey by triumphantly proclaiming, "This bill reflects a philosophy that says we trust the American people more than we trust government." It is difficult to see how a president of a democratic society who cannot trust his own government can be a "uniter not a divider."

Even when the opportunity arises to build "a single nation" that will overcome "deep differences," it is blatantly ignored. As electric power shortages and sharp increases in electricity costs hit California, the administration declared an "energy crisis." In a press conference, Vice President Dick Cheney responded to a question about conservation with the contemptuous dismissal of it as simply "a sign of personal virtue." His answer was correctly taken to mean that citizens had no role to play in dealing with a crisis affecting the entire nation.

The remark was widely criticized, and subsequent administration pronouncements tried to emphasize the importance of conservation. But it was almost wholly defined in terms of technological innovation. "Conservation," Bush declared, "does not mean doing without. Thanks to new technology, it can be doing better and smarter and cheaper." The equation of

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conservation with deprivation shows, as critics were quick to point out, that the administration was afraid that asking citizens to conserve energy would be taken as a call for "sacrifice" and interpreted as an attack on "the American way of life," which the president regards, the White House assured us, as "a blessed one." It is true that a change in the way an individual uses energy would not by itself solve "the crisis," but a heightened public consciousness about energy usage in daily living would be of practical value. Such a heightened consciousness would require some account of how individual action could contribute to the overall good. Instead, civic action was denigrated.

THERE IS A seeming difference here between the administration's conception of the role of citizens in the energy crisis and their role in its ideas about poverty. In his commencement address at the University of Notre Dame, Bush praised Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty for establishing "a federal commitment to the poor" even though it had the unintended consequence of turning the "welfare entitlement" into "an enemy of personal effort and responsibility, turning many recipients into dependents." When welfare "as we know it" was reformed in 1996 that situation was largely remedied. What remains are "the hardest problems," people with few marketable skills along with unfortunates suffering from "illiteracy and addiction, abuse and mental illness." These people represent "[m]uch of today's poverty [that] has more to do with troubled lives than a troubled economy." A troubled life requires "the personal support" of other "caring, concerned human being[s]." We must therefore, "revive the spirit of citizenship . . . marshal the compassion of our people," and in so doing we will enter the third stage "of combating poverty. . . .Our society must enlist, equip, and empower idealistic Americans in the work of compassion only they can provide." We are, after all, a people who "believe in social mobility. . . .We are the country of the second chance, where failure is never final."

Poverty in this view is a failure of social mobility; the poor, lacking a sense of personal responsibility, do not have what it takes to advance themselves. This conception erases the idea of poverty as we have historically known it—a social condition rooted in economic and political institutions. What remains, then, is to encourage the "work of compassion"—the personal efforts of "concerned human beings" and "mentors" offering "personal support" to help the "troubled lives" of the failures among us.

But calling upon compassion or "the good works of the faithful" as a means of dealing with the problem of poverty does not "revive the spirit of citizenship." Compassion is an awareness of the suffering of others and the wish or inclination to alleviate it. The inclination to act, however, does not mean that one will actually extend aid or do so generously. The spirit of citizenship does not rest on compassion. "Welfare entitlement," a two-sided moral coin, is precisely a good example of that spirit's meaning. Poor people, because they are citizens, may legitimately expect government aid, and their fellow citizens have a moral obligation to support the government because that is what citizens owe one another.

THE MORE general issue here is the meaning of citizenship itself. Citizens are members of a nation who act together to determine its course or fate, and this entails a sense of moral obligation to participate in the affairs of the nation. I don't mean, of course, that there must be initial agreement on what the ends of action should be or on how to reach them. It does mean, though, that citizenship requires, as a moral matter, that individuals participate with others to achieve a common good. When the problem is a social evil like poverty, a focus on the institutional roots of the evil helps in motivating people to meet their obligations as citizens. Maintaining that focus, acting as a catalyst for the discussion and implementation of appropriate policies, is one of the major functions of leadership in a democratic society. That kind of leadership is not found in the present administration.

In a democratic society, politics is the struggle among contending parties and groups to further their own policies and programs, and

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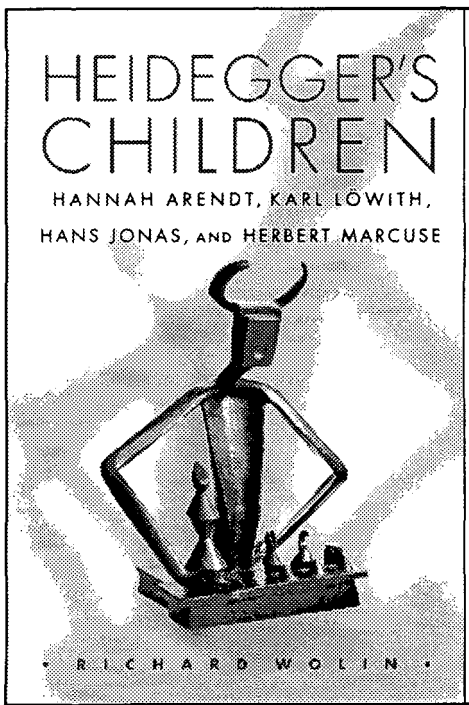
political discussion and action should revolve around those competing visions. The strategy of running against the government distorts politics because it obscures the issues that ought to be in the center of attention and, more fundamentally, it distorts the idea that government is the means for coping with basic social and economic problems. When, for example, jeremiads against "big government" or "the overweening bureaucrat" become the core of political argument, real political argument disappears.

If this ideological perspective encourages attitudes of distrust and cynicism, by the same token it discourages active participation. This is most apparent in Cheney's comment on conservation and Bush's yoking of "the revival of citizenship" with "the good works of the faithful." As I have already noted, the problem of poverty as a political issue is ruled out, since poverty is now only a matter of "troubled lives," and those lives need only the charitable help of the faithful. For Bush, as for other conservatives, the spirit of citizenship is satisfied when people act *separately*, not together, and in a sphere removed from the political arena.

Contemporary political alienation has been attributed to everything from the Watergate and Iran-contra scandals to the sexual antics of Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich, and these are undoubtedly important. But what has not been said is that politicians painting themselves as "leaders" encourage and support political alienation by subverting the meaning of democratic citizenship to promote their own narrow political goals. This is the ultimate scandal. ●

MURRAY HAUSKNECHT is a sociologist writing from New York.



Heidegger's Children

Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse

Richard Wolin

Martin Heidegger is perhaps the twentieth century's greatest philosopher. A seductive classroom presence, he attracted Germany's brightest young intellects during the 1920s. Many were Jews, who ultimately would have to reconcile their philosophical and, often, personal commitments to Heidegger with his nefarious political views.

This book explores how four of Heidegger's most influential Jewish students came to grips with his Nazi association and how it affected their thinking. Here Richard Wolin explores the nature of existential disillusionment and the juncture between politics and ideas.

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Leaving Many Children Behind

Monty Neill

By the time this is published, Congress likely will have mandated a massive increase in state standardized testing and threatened harsh sanctions on schools that fail to make "adequate yearly progress" in raising test scores. The consequences for children, educators, and schools will be profound. Touted as a means to "leave no child behind," the emphasis on testing—coupled with the lack of adequate school funding and the absence of programs to address the needs of poor children, such as housing, nutrition, and medical care—means many children will be left behind.

President George W. Bush has pushed hard for increased testing and test-based "accountability." Unlike Bill Clinton and the senior Bush, George W. proposed not a national test but mandated state testing—every child, every year, in grades three through eight, in reading and math, as well as once in high school. Currently, only fifteen states mandate such extensive testing.

Facing little coherent opposition from mainstream education and civil rights groups, the Senate and House passed plans to increase testing as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the major source of federal funds for schools. Both versions require test results to be publicly reported at the school, district, and state levels, disaggregated by race, low-income, limited English proficiency, and special needs status. The House bill requires *all* students to reach the "proficient" level on state tests within twelve years, exempting only pupils with severe special needs. ("Proficient" is one level below the top on a state test.) Every school and district in the nation, as well as the specified subpopulations within each school and district, will have to make one-twelfth of the progress toward proficiency each year. If a school or district that receives federal funding under Title I, Part A of ESEA fails to make this "adequate" progress, it will face interventions and then sanctions. The Senate version differs primarily in that it has a slower, 1 percent per year test score progress requirement for the subgroups.

A series of studies, most released after both houses passed their bills, found that almost every school in the nation will end up being identified as failing if either model is used. According to research by Thomas Kane and Douglas Staiger, a key part of the problem is that year-to-year changes in test scores are highly volatile, and decisions made on such changes "resemble a lottery."

The White House recognized this outcome as politically untenable and began working with a congressional conference committee to design a system that would identify a far more limited number of schools, mostly those serving low-income students. Any formula, however, will have to contend with multiple problems—from technical adequacy to the politically charged issues of whether "too many" or "too few" schools are labeled—and then progress to sanctions.

George W.'s national testing plan is flawed in a number of ways—each of which ought to be a focus of opposition. First, the legislation will impose far too much testing. We should argue instead for retaining the 1994 ESEA language, which requires states to assess students just once each in grades three through five, six through nine, and ten through twelve, in reading and math.

Second, the use of tests alone to impose sanctions violates professional standards for proper test use and will cause substantial dam-

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age to students and schools. Only test scores count in the formulas used to label schools. Unless the final bill includes measures such as graduation and grade-retention rates, schools will be rewarded for flunking low-scoring students (which virtually all research finds to be counterproductive) and driving them out of school.

Third, the sanctions are both unworkable and dangerous. A school facing "restructuring" must do one of the following things, all of them unlikely to work: (1) replace teachers and administrators (which ignores the nationwide shortage of teachers and principals, particularly in urban districts); (2) turn the school over to private management (there are only a few hundred privately managed public schools in the country, and they have had mixed results); (3) make the school a public charter (an approach that also has had mixed results); or (4) be taken over by the state (there are few such cases, and they have not succeeded in producing academic improvement).

Political Complexities

Test-driven reform, at state and now national levels, operates primarily as a means of intensifying schoolwork, and turns many schools into test preparation programs that focus on producing employees for lower-level jobs (only about one quarter of new jobs are projected to require college graduation) and providing more detailed information for employers to use in making hiring decisions. Business groups, therefore, are among its most powerful supporters.

A fixation on judging schools solely on test scores may also serve those who seek to privatize public education. More immediately, it centralizes control over schools by increasing state power, particularly in the majority of states that previously did not have statewide curricula. It obviously provides good public relations for politicians for whom it is an attractive substitute for genuine, and more expensive, school improvement. Thus, test-driven reform is primarily a corporate and conservative impulse, resembling the successful business-led efforts to impose "efficiency" on schools in the 1920s.

Test-driven reformers promise that schools serving low-income children will improve. Some believe the accountability provisions will force states to increase funding for low-income districts—which most such districts sorely need. Thus, this approach also has the support of some liberals and civil rights advocates.

In fact, most states with high-stakes testing programs have not improved school quality. Even the "model" states of North Carolina and Texas have low graduation rates, low college attendance and completion rates, and high grade-retention rates. Texas has failed to increase its scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading tests, despite gains on its state test, which suggests that teaching to the test is simply inflating scores on the state exams.

Because tests are not adequate tools for controlling curriculum and instruction, real educational improvement cannot happen with test-driven reform. The pro-testing group Achieve found that virtually no state test adequately assesses even the state's own standards. When tests are used for high-stakes purposes, teaching is reduced to test prep, both narrowing the tested subjects and often eliminating untested areas such as science and history, and causing the end of recess, shortening of lunch periods, and similar forms of "speed up." Due to the technological limits of testing combined with practical limits on how much time can be spent on standardized testing, tests will not become adequate. Indeed, the pressure to test more children more often will lead to lower quality instruments.

Schools serving rich children, however, do well enough on state tests to mostly ignore them. Those children will still get an education enabling them to succeed in college. Under the guise of high standards for all, tracking in U.S. schools may well intensify, as schools continue to operate primarily as producers of a differentiated labor force. Multicultural emphases in education will also be endangered, making schools even less hospitable to low-income children of color facing endless drill and kill. Thus, the support of test-driven school accountability by some civil rights and education groups is a very dangerous step: the path to high-quality schooling does not lead through standardized testing.

Even if this testing scheme passes, oppor-

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tunities to change the legislation will exist in coming years. This is a long-term battle, bound up closely with struggles for both social and educational justice. The challenge from civil rights groups to address the continuing, pernicious inadequacy of schools serving low-income children must be met, but not in isolation from other issues. It is as dangerous to presume that schools can fix poverty as it is to assume that schools serving low-income children cannot improve even with inadequate resources. The demand for equality and justice in education cannot be reduced to test scores and test preparation.

Across the nation, parents and educators are increasingly resisting high-stakes tests—tests used as a sole basis for making decisions about students or schools. Community forums, petitions, boycotts, rallies, public education, legislative initiatives, and more are becoming common means to address these tests. The testing battle will intensify in states and localities, providing many opportunities for engagement.

Meanwhile, high quality assessments, ones that can help teaching and learning and provide relevant, rich information for public reporting and school improvement, already exist, as do wonderful schools serving low-income children. These assessments can be and should be expanded. The campaign for better schools and for supportive, rather than reductive or punitive, accountability must develop together with opposition to the overuse and misuse of standardized tests. ●

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Behind the Anti-Globalization Label

Jackie Smith

THE TERM "anti-globalization movement" (AGM) has come to refer to recent mass protests against global capitalist expansion. Much of the public, and even participants in the movement itself, have uncritically accepted the label. But the naming of something gives power to those bestowing names, and the proponents of the anti-globalization misnomer use it to deflect challenges to corporate-capitalist ideology. Pundits such as Thomas Friedman or Paul Krugman can easily convince their readers that the "anti-globalization" movement is an irrational attempt to stop inevitable and unambiguously good economic development. Along with many government officials (particularly those from rich countries), they frequently claim, We know what the movement is *against*, but what is it *for?*

The AGM label, in short, provides a convenient defense for global capitalist ideologies while it shifts public attention away from the critical message protesters seek to bring to the public agenda. The task of naming the movement should not be left to those in power; it is part of the struggle itself. So let's look at some themes in protester discourse that suggest more pro-active alternatives.

A Movement for *Comprehensive* Globalization

A lingering image that I took away from the Quebec City protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas is of photocopies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that activists attached to the chain-link fence separating the public from the official meeting site. "Anti-globalization" protesters were, in fact, appealing to *global* norms to demonstrate the arguably anti-global tendencies of their opponents. If resistance to government efforts to

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enact less restrictive rules about the flow of goods and services across borders is "anti-global," then governments' own efforts to restrict internationally established democratic norms must also qualify as "anti-global." The key question is whether globalization refers only to rules governing economic exchange or whether it also encompasses rules of social and political engagement. The AGM clearly shares the latter view. In this sense it is a Comprehensive Globalization Movement.

The CGM calls for a holistic definition of globalization, where social and political integration is negotiated alongside economic integration. Different groups within the movement differ in the relative weight they attach to each of these "pillars" of globalization, but everyone agrees that the prevailing policy discourse gives priority to economic integration (read unrestricted markets). Free trade advocates justify this priority with the claim that the benefits of trade will automatically "trickle-down" to all sectors of society. The messy and politically difficult issues of distribution and environmental sustainability are then ignored—even formally excluded from consideration by agreements drafted largely by trade bureaucrats and their corporate advisory panels. For many of them, the problems we face are caused not by faulty economic reasoning, but by the muddled policies that result when non-experts are allowed to influence economic planning and introduce environmental and social regulations.

What the CGM is trying to say is that by separating economic policy decisions from other aspects of politics, governments have introduced unacceptable contradictions into international law. Trade regimes are negotiated in complete isolation from other important international agreements on human rights and environmental protection. These institutional contradictions must be addressed; the goal of reducing restrictions on international trade must not trump other social goals.

By looking at some actual efforts of groups within this movement, one can see that the movement is better seen as a positive attempt to resolve the institutional contradictions of globalization policy rather than as a knee-jerk opposition to globalization. For instance, groups like Food First International have argued that the structural adjustment programs implemented as part of World Bank and International Monetary Fund loan packages must not violate existing international agreements on human rights and social welfare. A coalition of human rights groups—the International Committee on Human Rights in Trade and Investment—has worked within the United Nations Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to advance resolutions that highlight incompatibilities between established human rights norms and proposed or newly enacted trade liberalization policies. As a result of this pressure, in 1998 and 1999, the subcommission passed resolutions criticizing international trade agreements.

Another effort to harmonize the policies of global institutions is reflected in the Transnational Resource and Action Center's insistence that the UN withdraw from its "Global Compact" with transnational corporations. The Global Compact allows corporate donors to be associated with the UN without any monitoring of corporate compliance with basic UN principles. TRAC's report, "Tangled up in Blue," denounces as "blue-washing" the efforts by some of the most flagrant violators of fundamental human rights, such as Nike and Rio Tinto, to enhance their corporate images by enlisting as "Partners" with the UN. Global Compact opponents ask, Why shouldn't the UN's "Partners" be required to uphold its legal principles, such as those embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Labor Organization treaties? (see www.corpwatch.org)

A Movement for Global Justice

The first major mobilization following Seattle was the April 16, 2000 protests at the annual spring meeting of the World Bank and IMF. The coalition of groups organizing those protests called itself the Mobilization for Global Justice, a label that many local groups have also adopted. Looking across the spectrum of groups involved in the protests to change the way the world's economies are governed, one finds many reasons to call this a movement for justice.

The major agenda of protester rallies and

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teach-ins is to demonstrate the different effects of the same global economic policies. Movement members devote tremendous amounts of time, money, and energy to learning about the experience of other people across the globe. Such exchanges generate a sense of solidarity as they help clarify the identity of global economic institutions as a common enemy. The stories of workers' woes help generate a shared sense of injustice and make explicit how this diverse movement defines justice. In Quebec City, for instance, Canadian workers spoke of the effects on their communities of the job losses caused by companies' decisions to relocate to areas with lower wages and labor standards. Their counterparts from Latin America (the "beneficiaries" of Canadian job losses) then described their degraded working conditions, low wages, and the persistent company threats to relocate (again!) if workers organize. People's Global Action, an important network in this movement, has organized a number of cross-continental caravans to promote greater understanding of globalization's effects. It has brought activists from the global South to communities in Europe and North America to give witness to the social and environmental impacts of the commodity production that makes high levels of consumption possible in the North.

This movement is global in the sense that it is actively working to promote a globally defined vision of justice. It seeks to dramatize connections between production and consumption, revealing the human and environmental costs that companies prefer to keep hidden deep within complex production chains. The movement, moreover, seeks to expose the global economic system as a direct descendent of the earlier, less subtly exploitative, colonial system, demonstrating how southern economic and political choices are defined by global economic structures.

A Movement for Global Democracy

If one had to identify a common thread among the demands of activists in this movement, it would be a demand for democracy. As governments seek to coordinate policies at the global level, they have systematically excluded ever greater numbers of people from decision-making. Against this exclusion, activists call for greater access to information about the free trade agreements that governments are negotiating. Many were surprised to learn that even their elected legislators could not obtain a copy of the negotiating text for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (only a heavily censored version of the text was released, months after the Quebec summit). These agreements have an enormous impact on everyday life in local communities, and so the members of these communities are beginning to demand a say in their negotiation. This pattern, incidentally, is not unlike that of earlier social movements seeking to democratize the practices of national states.

Clearly the structures of global financial institutions are inconsistent with the values of democracy that give legitimacy to modern governments. The United Nations has produced countless resolutions and treaties that aim to reinforce democratic norms. And yet, governments have managed to create fundamentally undemocratic institutions like the WTO. Even trade proponents recognize a need to increase the transparency of these institutions, although their main emphasis is on the need to "educate" the public about trade institutions and their benefits in order to prevent protests by those who don't fully understand what's going on.

The AGM is "anti-global" in one sense only. It resists attempts to govern economic decisions solely at the global level. Local control is also required, most activists would argue, if economic decisions are to be sensitive to environmental constraints and to the needs of everyone affected. A globally oriented economy responds to those with the most dollars (or other exchangeable currency), not to cash-starved farmers who produce food for export economies and don't earn enough to buy food for their own families. A global marketplace does not produce medicines needed to save poor children, but it does produce pharmaceuticals that appeal to the sexual and cosmetic desires of the rich. So this movement opposes an economy that is organized and run globally. As the Russian social theorist Boris Kagarlitsky pointed out to activists attending teach-ins in Prague last fall, "Centrally planned economies

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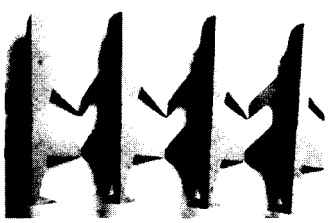
don't work." And a world economy governed by a thousand-page treaty defining the WTO and controlled by a handful of transnational corporations (models of centralized economic planning) seems far closer to the Soviet ideal than does the decentralized, democratically controlled economy this movement supports.

Another World Is Possible

One of the biggest successes of the recent wave of protests is that they have derailed the once unchallenged assumption that neoliberal globalization is inevitable. We can now consider what new (or perhaps already tested) economic alternatives might replace neoliberalism. The Zapatista rebellion insisted that "another world is possible," and that rallying cry has been echoed in many gatherings around the world. Most notably, the slogan provides the impetus for the World Social Forum—the movement's alterna-



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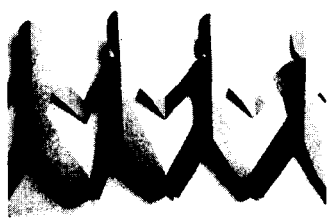

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tive to the Davos World Economic Forum—which will be held in Porto Alegre for a second time this coming January. The challenge for those organizing around the Social Forum is to find ways to resist the marginalization of this movement in the mass media. The movement must foster real public debate about how to organize society so as to put people and the environment ahead of money. It must think seriously about what kinds of institutions could effectively promote this goal. And one way to begin is to resist the AGM label, consciously and vocally. ●

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Gin and Tonics at Tito's House

Kira Brunner

ACROSS THE STREET from the compound where Slobodan Milosevic barricaded himself against police last winter before being carted off to jail sits a beautiful villa once inhabited by Marshal Tito. This same villa, with its manicured gardens and freshly painted façade, was the site chosen by the U.S. ambassador, William Montgomery, and his wife for their Fourth of July garden party.

Cream-colored invitations stamped with an American bald eagle were hand-delivered a week earlier to politicians, heads of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academics, ambassadors, and Serbian socialites. The invitations arrived just as Milosevic was being shipped off to the Hague to stand trial before the United Nations war-crimes tribunal. At the arraignment the day before Montgomery's party, Milosevic defiantly dismissed charges that he orchestrated the expulsion of seven hundred and forty thousand ethnic Albanians from Kosovo and the violent deaths of hundreds of others. Asked by Judge Richard May whether he wanted the indictment read, Milosevic replied, "That's your problem"—a statement that sums up his attitude during the last thirteen years of war and destruction in the Balkans. Milosevic claimed that "this trial's aim is to provide false justification for the war crimes committed in Yugoslavia" by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Milosevic, in his seventeen-by-ten-foot cell, was all but forgotten as the United States Independence Day party moved into full swing. Women in silk floral dresses and men in breezy summer suits waited in a forty-five minute line to shake hands with the U.S. ambassador. Nearby, the special police—better known for midnight raids and war profiteering—paced back and forth between Milosevic's former compound and the party, directing traffic and keeping the crowd on the walkway. The resentful grimaces on their faces were a hint that they, unlike the crowd they had been commandeered to patrol, had not yet forsaken Milosevic. Another who hadn't forgotten was Mira Markovi, Milosevic's wife and political partner, who was quoted earlier that morning as saying, "I still find him cute and likable."

I found myself in line with the others at the invitation of Obrad Savic, president of the Belgrade Circle—a small NGO that publishes left-leaning books and holds annual lectures on the future of democracy in Serbia. Savic, who spent the last ten years resisting the Milosevic regime, was giddy as he waved his invitation at the two security guards in dark suits standing at the gate.

As we entered the garden, a jazz band was playing as waiters in tuxedos served drinks and finger food to the Serbian elite, many of whom had made their fortunes under the Milosevic

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regime. "This is fantastic," Savic commented, taking in the sight of more than a thousand people on the front lawn. "Last year when they threw this party, only a hundred people dared to show up. People were just too scared to come."

It wasn't only those who have always spoken out against Milosevic who ventured out to sip gin and tonics with the Americans. As the band plays "Summertime" and "Old Man River," intellectuals rub elbows with ambassadors from ex-socialist countries; uniformed officers shake hands with bright-eyed liberals newly elected to Parliament; and world-weary NGO workers blow kisses to one another over the heads of well-dressed "businessmen," the profiteers of the Balkan wars.

The tide has turned, and everyone present appeared aware that it is in America's favor. In order for Serbia to recover economically, it must open its arms to Western aid, entrepreneurs, and corporate investors. One glance around the party was an uncanny peek at what Berlin might have looked like after the Second World War. Members of the old power elite had put on their finest, taken up a new line, and simply walked across the street from Milosevic's house to make nice with the Americans. Like it or not, any economic stability for Serbia now lies in rejecting the raging nationalism of the former regime and instead following the dictates of a Western agenda that could lead to acceptance into the European Union. But behind the trappings there has been little serious examination of Serbian nationalism. And a dismissive attitude toward the past may prove dangerous as fighting heats up in Macedonia.

Once the party was well underway, President Vojislav Kostunica arrived. Elected last fall after the October demonstrations that overthrew Milosevic, Kostunica cut a fine figure as the poster boy for stability and democracy in the Balkans. The international community has had little trouble forgetting Kostunica's own nationalism, which rears its head sometimes in subtle ways, as when he bemoaned the surrender of a strong Serbian identity for a "Yugoslav, European, or anti-nationalist" one, and at other times in not so subtle ways, as when he was photographed on a trip to Kosovo brandishing an AK-47 alongside Serbian militants.

KOSTUNICA HAS succeeded in walking a very narrow political line, balancing his own nationalism and indignation at the mandates of the West, on the one hand, and a sincere reverence for democracy and incorruptibility, on the other. In this way the West has felt confident that although he may whine and balk, he has catered to their most urgent demands. Kostunica had continually stated that he would never send Milosevic to the Hague, resolving instead to establish a "truth commission" to try Milosevic in Serbia. Yet, as Kostunica makes his way across the lawn, Milosevic sits in prison. An objective truth commission would probably have been difficult to establish in Serbia and would have dealt with little beyond Milosevic's crimes against the Serbian people.

"Do you want to meet him?" Obrad asks as he catches sight of Kostunica. Not only did the two go to school together, but they use the same dry cleaner and run into one another when picking up the laundry. At times Belgrade has the nosy intimacy of a small mid-western town. When I am introduced to him as an American who works for *Dissent* magazine, he is gracious and polite. "Ah yes, *Dissent*," he says, "I used to read that when I was young." ●

KIRA BRUNNER is an assistant editor of *Dissent*.

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India and the Bomb

Kanti Bajpai

THREE YEARS after India and Pakistan shocked the world with their nuclear tests, it is worth revisiting their arguments for nuclear weapons. Many in the West have already accepted those arguments and grown used to the idea that both countries will remain nuclear powers. Other Westerners argue that nuclear weapons will bring about military stability in the region. Still others justify Indian and Pakistani nuclearization in relation to the unwillingness of the five established nuclear powers to eliminate their own arsenals. These reactions are understandable enough. The Indian and Pakistani case for nuclear weapons is, however, deeply flawed, as I hope to show. I will focus on the Indian case. But an equally strong refutation can be mounted against Pakistani claims—and also against the claims of all the other declared or aspiring nuclear powers.

The promise of nuclear weapons in a strictly military sense is deterrence. According to the governments of India and Pakistan, the nuclear tests of May 1998 were for "defensive" purposes, that is, for deterrence. Both governments stand committed to going beyond the tests to construct a so-called "minimum deterrence." The Indian government has said that its minimum deterrence is aimed at Pakistan and China. New Delhi's pronouncements suggest that China is the more important threat. By contrast, India's day-to-day diplomatic and strategic moves indicate that Pakistan is a coequal if not greater threat.

Beyond this, some Indian strategic commentators have argued that the United States is also a military presence to worry India. A number of factors are cited to bolster the argument about an American nuclear threat. These include the use of the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*, to "coerce" India in the Bangladesh war in 1971; U.S. counter-proliferation policy, which, at minimum, could translate into military strikes against nascent nuclear programs, including perhaps India's; and U.S. geo-strategy, which is hostile to rising powers such as India who could one day be global rivals and who, in any case, are seen as regional spoilers.

As things stand, the U.S. threat is usually portrayed as subsidiary and remote, one that it is politically incorrect to talk about openly. Nevertheless, with time, as India's missile and submarine programs go forward, we should expect to see far more open references to the American threat. With long-range missile capability, it will be technically feasible to mount a retaliatory strike against the continental United States. If it becomes technically possible to do so, there will undoubtedly be those who will push to make it operationally viable.

At this point, though, the Indian government has identified Pakistan and China as the reasons for its tests and for the need to build a nuclear arsenal. Is its case justified? Do the nuclear capabilities of Pakistan and China warrant India's nuclearization? Is there no other recourse?

The Pakistani Threat?

Pakistan has had the capacity to test and deploy nuclear weapons since about the late 1980s. The most authoritative statement regarding Pakistani capabilities came from A. Q. Khan, the architect of Pakistan's weapons program, during the "Brasstacks" crisis of January 1987. The tests in the Chaghai Hills on May 28, 1998, only confirmed Pakistan's nuclear status. Whether or not Pakistan would have tested independent of the Indian tests is unknown, but after New Delhi's decision there was little doubt that Pakistan would respond.

Pakistan's nuclear tests and the revelations

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regarding its missile program suggest that India now truly confronts a nuclear-armed neighbor on its western border. The *Ghauri* missile, which reputedly is capable of carrying nuclear payloads, has the range to hit targets throughout India except in the northeast of the country. The case for an Indian nuclear deterrent therefore appears reasonable. Within the framework of deterrence thinking, this is logical: if an adversary has nuclear weapons, then one must invest in a retaliatory capability. But what if we take a step back and ask whether Pakistani nuclearization could have been prevented? Furthermore, is it not possible, even now, to turn the clock back, so that both India and Pakistan do not fall into the deterrence trap?

Could Pakistan have been stopped from developing nuclear weapons? The answer is probably yes. Although it is true that Pakistan was moving toward the acquisition of weapons capability before the Indian test of 1974, it is not clear that Islamabad would have gone forward with such speed and determination if New Delhi had unambiguously closed off the nuclear option in the 1960s. With India categorically and verifiably out of the nuclear weapons hunt, the pressure on Islamabad to join the hunt would have been largely absent. This is a what-if of history, admittedly, but not a risible or trivial one. At any rate, one opportunity to turn the nuclear clock back was probably lost in the 1960s.

A second opportunity to avoid a nuclear arms race was lost in the 1970s and 1980s when Pakistan stated publicly, on several occasions, that it would sign any denuclearizing agreement India was prepared to accept. Islamabad's various offers were seen as tactical maneuvers designed to embarrass India diplomatically. Nevertheless, if India had called Pakistan's "bluff," it is difficult to see how, given the weight of world opinion, as well as influential sectors of domestic opinion, Islamabad could have reneged on its own commitment. More important though, for Pakistan, is the problem of nuclear asymmetry: India will likely always have an overwhelming preponderance of nuclear weapons, leaving Pakistan in fear of a disarming first strike from its neighbor. A regional accord would have been—and still is—in Islamabad's long-term interest.

Proponents of deterrence argue that Pakistan would have gone nuclear anyway because of its seemingly permanent inferiority in conventional weaponry and its lack of strategic depth. This is another what-if of history, but credible enough, and it deserves a reply. Deterrence theorists cannot be proved altogether incorrect. However, surely it is not beyond reasonable belief that if India had given up the nuclear option and had simultaneously offered to negotiate on a variety of bilateral issues—including Kashmir and conventional force levels—then Pakistani fears of India's military preponderance could have been assuaged. The Simla Agreement of 1972 mandated bilateral discussions on Kashmir. In return, Pakistan was to normalize relations with India by reopening diplomatic, economic, and social contacts. Bringing down troop levels, so that India would have had enough for defense against Pakistan and China as well as internal security needs, was not impossible. A defensive posture with limits on the more offensive weapons—strike aircraft, armor, mobile artillery—would have supplemented manpower reductions and was not impossible either. In sum, talks on Kashmir plus a conventional forces agreement would have stood a very good chance of reassuring Pakistan and of stopping the advance of its nuclear weapons program.

The past is of course the past. Can India stop Pakistan's further nuclearization? It probably can. Even now, if India renounced nuclear weapons, Pakistan would have little option but to end its program. The reopening of talks on Kashmir and other bilateral disputes would be further incentives to denuclearize. Finally, Indian and Pakistani conventional forces could be constituted so that neither side could launch a surprise attack in most circumstances. There is no guarantee that conventional deterrence will always hold—any more than that nuclear deterrence is foolproof. But the failure of deterrence, when nuclear weapons are absent, need not be catastrophic—as was evident in India's wars of 1948, 1962, 1965, 1971, and 1999. So, with the appropriate conventional force configuration, India and Pakistan would either deter each other or, if deterrence broke down, would robustly defend themselves and repel the invader.

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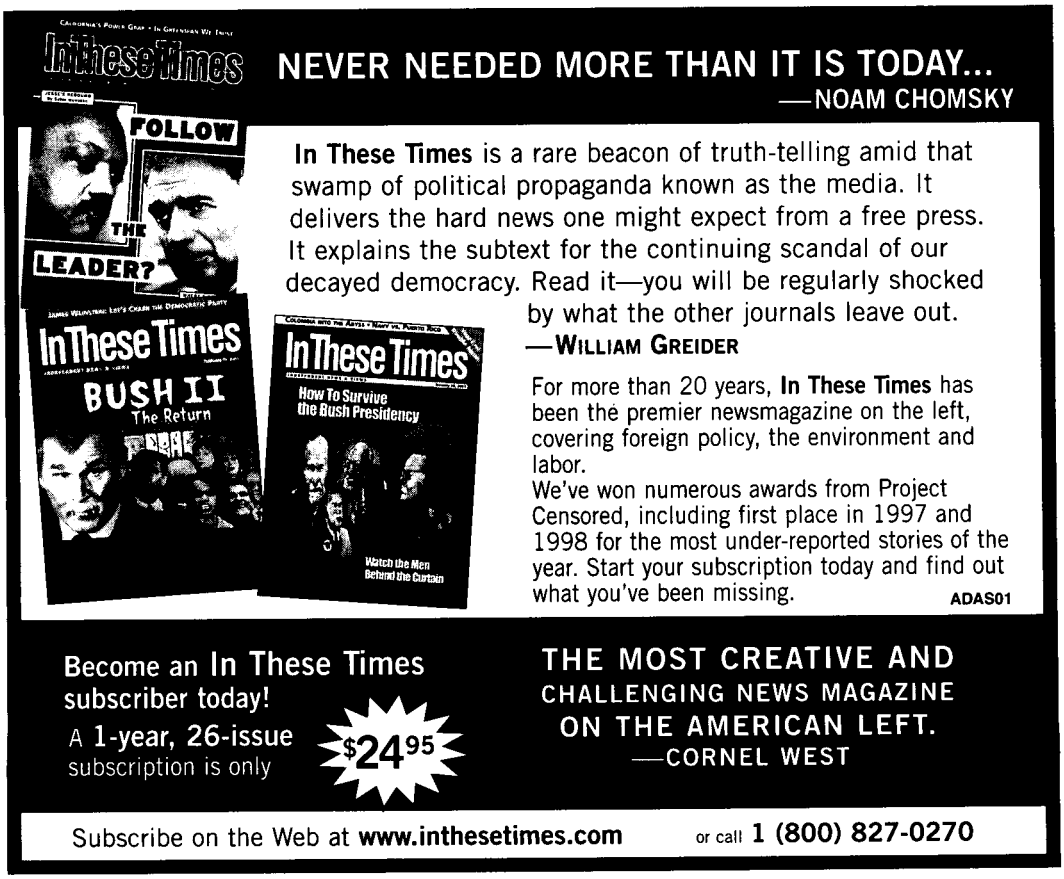
The Chinese Threat?

The Indian government and Indian strategic analysts argue that the *raison atomique* of the Indian nuclear program is not only Pakistan but also China. Does India need nuclear weapons to deter China? The question presumes that China is a nuclear threat, but this is doubtful.

If India did not have nuclear weapons, Chinese nuclear intimidation could be imagined in three kinds of cases. First, the unresolved border dispute between the two countries could flare up and lead to a confrontation. Second, internal instabilities in China could encourage external adventurism. As the Chinese leadership struggled to assert or retain political control, it might be tempted to use external "threats" to outmaneuver and discipline internal rivals. Third, China and India, by virtue of their size and self-image, could become perennial rivals for influence in Asia if not farther afield. Nuclear asymmetry, it could be argued, would strengthen Beijing's hand in each case. Facing a non-nuclear opponent, China could become more obdurate over the border issue. Should instabilities in Tibet and other areas of southern China tempt the leadership to "teach" India a lesson (as a way of rallying support domestically), this temptation could be reinforced by nuclear superiority. And China's nuclear confidence might enable it to enlarge its sphere of influence to India's detriment.

Let's examine these three propositions. First, while the border dispute is unresolved in a formal sense, Beijing has already got most of what it wanted. If its primary aim was to secure the land route from Xinkiang to Tibet, it long ago accomplished its goal. China is the satisfied power on the border issue and has no incentive to stir up trouble. As long as India does not choose to challenge the present position by military means, the two countries should remain at peace. Since New Delhi's stated and preferred position is to obtain a negotiated settlement, no serious military hostilities are likely.

Second, there is considerable room for de-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bate over the "scapegoat" thesis. Were internal factors truly responsible for Beijing's wars against India and Vietnam? How vulnerable and unstable is China likely to be in the future? Can domestic political troubles be eased, in the new China, by external distractions? Finally, and most important, would war with India be credible in this regard, given that the only serious bilateral issue, namely the border, favors China? And would it help or hurt an insecure regime to raise an India "threat" in such circumstances?

The answers to these questions are the business of sinologists, to be sure, but it doesn't take an expert on China to know that India has never figured in China's threat cosmology in any serious fashion—unlike the Russian Expansionist, the American Imperialist, and the Japanese Upstart. India's nuclearization, the naming of China as "potential enemy number one" by India's defense minister, and the rather unfortunate letter from Prime Minister Vajpayee to President Clinton (which tried to justify the May 1998 tests by citing the China threat and was leaked to the press by the Americans!) may change all that; but historically these two civilizations have not had occasion to demonize each other. Unless India is maladroit enough to team up with one of China's older enemies or tempted foolishly to roil up trouble in Tibet, it is unlikely that this benign historical relationship will change for the worse.

Third, the proposition that nuclear weapons have enhanced China's status (and the status of the other nuclear weapon states) is a constant and hoary theme in Indian thinking, but an ill-founded one. China's growing international stature is far more clearly linked to quite different factors: the vitality and quality of its top leaders; the speed with which, after 1949, the new government exerted political control and embarked on social reforms; the dramatic improvements in the quality of physical life; the military victories in Tibet and Korea in the 1950s and the defeat of India in 1962; the break with the Soviets in 1958; the increasing sophistication of its conventional armed forces over the past two decades; the dynamism of its economy since the late 1970s; and, notwithstanding a certain measure of turbulence, an impressive degree of political stability (even if one disapproves of the way in which stability has been achieved).

In short, nuclear weapons have not hurt China's standing in world affairs, but it is untenable to ascribe Chinese status and influence primarily to their possession. (The rise of non-nuclear Germany and Japan as great powers and the decay and collapse of a nuclear-ridden Soviet Union further challenge the link between nuclear weapons, status, and influence.) What is reasonably evident is that a nuclear India would be unable to match China for status and influence unless it made important economic, social, and political changes. If this analysis is correct, India's nuclearization will make little or no difference to its positioning vis-à-vis China. Put differently, the real race with China is civic and economic, not nuclear and strategic.

If we add to this the progress that has been made in India-China relations since the early 1980s, then the likelihood of nuclear intimidation across the Himalayas seems even more remote. Since the early 1980s, India and China have held talks on the border dispute. The talks have been institutionalized as part of a Joint Working Group that has continued to meet in spite of various ups and downs in the relationship. Indeed, as a further sign of normalization, India-China interactions at the political level have increased rapidly. Since the mid-1980s, the foreign ministers, prime ministers, and presidents have in aggregate met at least a dozen times. Most recently, after the war with Pakistan in 1999, India and China agreed to a "security dialogue" that takes discussions beyond the unresolved border quarrel.

In addition to the border talks, summitry, and security dialogue, India and China have agreed to a number of confidence-building measures. These include an understanding on the maintenance of peace and tranquility along the line of actual control and on thinning forces along the border. The improved relationship allowed India to transfer up to two divisions of troops from the northern front to the Northeast and Kashmir for internal security duties—no mean benefit at a critical moment. Finally, India-China economic contacts have deepened. After Rajiv Gandhi's visit of 1988, bor-

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der trade was permitted, and trade links between public sector units were encouraged. Thereafter, more normal trade links have been established, with the private sector leading the way. Last year, bilateral trade stood at over two billion dollars, having risen from a paltry two hundred million dollars in 1991.

None of this means that India should put on rose-colored spectacles when it looks at China. No Indian leader—Jawaharlal Nehru included—has had any illusions about China. China is a big power, albeit with many weaknesses; it continues to hold Indian territory and withhold recognition of the Indian states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh (even if this is largely a tactical ploy); and it has its share of territorial ambition. India should therefore be watchful on its borders and should ensure that it has sufficient force to deal with Chinese provocations. India's serious weaknesses in conventional forces, gaps in army recruitment, and flagging morale are far more to the point than the reflexive, flapping hysteria over a nuclear threat from China. The real military weaknesses in relation to China may well be ignored while the political class fiddles with phantasmagoric images of nuclear coercion.

Options

There is no credible movement in India to renounce nuclear weapons. My intention in outlining the renunciation option is to demonstrate that it is a strategic possibility and that it need not be based on moral objections to nuclear weapons. It is important to do this because there is a certain fatalism about the Indian nuclear option that has only deepened as a result of the 1998 tests. You can hear the fatalism in the retort frequently voiced in India that questioning the rationale for the bomb is now "water under the bridge," that the need of the hour is to "get on with things" diplomatically and militarily, that it is the "future that matters," and that Indians must "pull together" toward a consensus on nuclearization. Contrary to this pragmatic view, it needs to be emphasized that there are other security pathways ahead and that these may best be revealed by a critical, even counterfactual, look at the past.

Nuclear weapons cannot be disinvented. But they can be delegitimized, prohibited, and abolished—much as is now being done with biological and chemical weapons. Challenging the rationales for the utility of nuclear weapons is a vital first step in this process. That challenge may be mounted from various perspectives, including the moral one. Unfortunately, moral arguments against nuclear weapons tend to be dismissed as idealistic. A plain, commonsensical argument against the bomb, couched within the traditional vocabulary of strategic discourse, is a necessary supplement to any moral critique. The nuclear choices of all the nuclear powers, including India and Pakistan, must be challenged in this way if we are to progress toward a nuclear-free world. ●

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Equal Rights for Foreign Resident Workers?

The Case of Filipina Domestic Workers in Hong Kong and Singapore

Daniel A. Bell

MIDDLE- AND UPPER-CLASS citizens of wealthy, industrialized countries must grapple with the question of who will do the low-status and difficult but socially necessary work that locals are unwilling to do. The answer, usually, is to import foreigners from poorer countries. This often results in two classes of residents with unequal rights and privileges. Is this arrangement morally tolerable?

Liberal democratic theorists typically argue that foreign resident workers should be put on the road to citizenship. There may be a case for differential rights in the short term, but those who live and work within a territory, pay taxes, send children to schools, and participate in neighborhood activities should not be treated as permanent second-class (non)citizens. They belong, and belonging matters morally. As the University of Toronto political theorist Joseph Carens puts it, long-term membership in civil society creates a moral entitlement to all the legal rights of membership, including citizenship itself. After a certain time, say five or ten years, the state should give equal rights to workers in its territory, regardless of their background.

This argument, as Carens recognizes, mirrors the emerging pattern in most Western liberal democracies. There is a trend toward extending to long-term residents most if not all the legal rights of citizens and improving access to citizenship for the descendants of immigrants and for immigrants themselves. The situation is different, however, in developed countries outside the West, and this gives rise to potentially troubling moral questions. I will focus on the case of Filipina domestic workers who do most of the paid housework and childrearing in Hong Kong and Singapore. These workers are denied the rights of citizenship and have no realistic hope of ever becoming equal members of the political community. In Hong Kong, for example, the contracts of domestic workers can be renewed indefinitely (it is not uncommon to find women who have been working in the territory for ten or twelve years), but they cannot apply for permanent residence. This situation gives rise to many injustices. It doesn't follow, however, that the prescriptions of Western liberalism will help secure the interests of these women. The question is more complicated than these prescriptions allow for; global inequalities make for hard choices. There is much to learn from the experience of the two territories.

Does Democracy Benefit Foreign Resident Workers?

More than a hundred and fifty thousand domestic workers from the Philippines are employed in Hong Kong, out of a total population of approximately seven million (Filipinos constitute the largest non-Chinese group in the territory). In Singapore, foreigners account for 30 percent of the country's workforce, the highest in Asia. Prominent among these are the Filipina domestic workers—approximately eighty thousand out of a population of four million. Despite these numbers, however, the idea of granting equal citizenship rights to this group is basically a non-issue in both Singapore and Hong Kong. Even some of the most radical social critics do not argue that Filipina domestic workers should be made actual or potential citizens. It is tempting to explain this fact with reference to the less-than-democratic politics of Singapore and Hong Kong. Would more political democracy—in the sense that citizens choose their leaders by means of free

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and fair competitive elections—benefit Filipina domestic workers?

In Singapore, there are substantial constraints on the democratic process. Promising opposition candidates face retaliation in the form of bankruptcy, humiliation, and even exile, with the result that few dare to challenge the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) at election time. The government explicitly threatens to withdraw services from constituencies that support the opposition. The pro-government media provide little, if any, time and space for the opposition to present its views. Between elections, the government employs harsh measures against professional and religious organizations critical of its policies.

Still, the PAP wins by comfortable margins, and even the opposition concedes that it enjoys majority support. In two recent elections, the main opposition parties deliberately adopted a strategy of contesting less than half the seats so that voters could support the opposition safe in the knowledge that the PAP would still control the government. If Singapore became a Western-style liberal democracy overnight, it is more than likely that the PAP would still form the government.

In Hong Kong, there is no pretense that the people choose their political leaders. Hong Kong is an executive-led government, and the chief executive is selected by an eight hundred-person committee composed largely of financial tycoons and pro-Beijing forces. Judging from opinion polls, it is quite likely that Tung Chee-hwa, the current chief executive, would be rejected if there were democratic elections. Less than half the legislature is composed of directly elected members, and even the pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) complains that the legislature lacks political influence. In effect, the Hong Kong government delegates power to top civil servants known as "policy secretaries," who devise policies, persuade the administration to support them, and then lobby the legislature to adopt them—all functions carried out by ministers in most democratic countries.

It turns out, however, that foreign domestic workers are better protected in undemocratic Hong Kong than in somewhat more democratic Singapore. The minimum wage is set at U.S.$470 per month in Hong Kong (including room and board), compared to U.S.$250 per month in Singapore (employers in Singapore must also pay a "maid levy"—in effect, a luxury tax—of U.S.$225 per month to the Singaporean government). Domestic workers have more statutory holidays in Hong Kong—every Sunday and most public holidays, compared to one day off per month in Singapore (after three months of probation). They can qualify for legal aid in Hong Kong, but not in Singapore. Domestic workers in Singapore are obliged to sign a Statement of Undertaking that prohibits them from marrying or cohabiting with any Singaporean citizen or permanent resident; there are no such restrictions in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government blocks off main roads in the financial district every Sunday to allow domestic workers to congregate; there are no comparable public spaces for workers in Singapore. Domestic workers in Hong Kong have rights to maternity leave; in Singapore, female domestic workers have to undergo pregnancy tests every six months, and they are immediately deported if they are pregnant. In Singapore, domestic workers are subject to the death penalty; capital punishment is illegal in Hong Kong. Perhaps the most telling sign of better conditions is that most domestic workers prefer to work in Hong Kong, given the choice.

What explains this difference? One important factor is that domestic workers in Hong Kong are free to organize self-help groups and public protests to secure their interests. There may be fewer voting rights in Hong Kong, but civil liberties such as the freedom of speech and the right to associate are relatively secure. Thus, groups of domestic workers can and do publicly express their grievances: on May 1 (Labor Day) of this year, for example, groups of domestic workers demonstrated to abolish the two-week rule (a fourteen-year-old rule that forbids migrant workers from changing jobs and prohibits those who break their contracts from staying in Hong Kong for more than two weeks). In Hong Kong, more than twenty nongovernmental organizations cater to the interests of domestic workers, compared to three (severely constrained)

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NGOs in Singapore. The Hong Kong government feels greater pressure to respond to mobilized pro-worker groups in civil society.

On a more controversial note, I submit that the relative lack of democracy in Hong Kong may not be harmful—may in fact be beneficial—to Filipina domestic workers in the territory. There are obviously many areas of potential or actual conflict between employers and their helpers. If employers can vote for their community's decision makers, they will likely favor policies that work to the detriment of their domestic workers in cases of conflict. Politicians, for their part, may be tempted to pander to the interests of employers; at least, they will not forcefully argue on behalf of disenfranchised domestic workers. That may explain why opposition parties in Singapore have not campaigned to increase the wages of domestic workers; they can't get any political capital out of this issue.

In Hong Kong, however, decision makers are not constrained by the majority will, and they can rely on their own sense of justice and decency to implement policies that favor domestic workers. This may seem like a flimsy basis for protection, but given the choice between relying on "the people" and on meritocratically chosen civil servants, foreign residents may prefer the latter—especially if they also have the right to form pressure groups. For foreign resident workers, a Hong Kong-style liberal non-democracy is preferable to a Singapore-style illiberal democracy.

Consider, for example, the recent decision to cut the wages of domestic workers. In 1998, Hong Kong suffered a severe bout of the "Asian economic flu" (the stock market collapsed, property values fell by half, unemployment rose from 2 percent to 5 percent, and so on). Some employers found it difficult to make ends meet, and they began to push for a reduction of the domestic workers' minimum wage. An opinion poll showed that most people thought the salary for domestic workers was too high and should be reduced by up to 30 percent. Employer associations, as the *South China Morning Post* put it, "gleefully preached that foreign maids in Singapore earned less than half the salary pocketed by domestic workers here, saying maids should help their employers 'in this critical time.'" The Employers of Overseas Domestic Helpers Association suggested a pay cut of 35 percent. The most vocal politician was an urban councilor named Jennifer Chow (herself an employer of three domestic workers), who told the local press:

> The working hours for live-in maids in Hong Kong are not specified and I think it should be in the contract. We should look at the system in Singapore where they set the work at 16 hours a day, which seems reasonable. I have had complaints from several employers saying their domestic helpers started work around 8 a.m. and are going into their rooms at 9 p.m. and will not do any more work—if we set the working hours these situations would not happen.

Chow, who came to her conclusions after visiting Singapore to study packages for domestic workers, also advocated a 20 percent cut in wages.

In early 1999, the Hong Kong government cut the wages of domestic workers by 5 percent. Unsurprisingly, neither side was satisfied. A group of domestic workers marched to government offices in protest. Connie Bragas-Regalado, chair of the United Filipinos in Hong Kong, said, "It is the responsibility of the Hong Kong government to ensure that our wage is protected." For their part, employers' groups protested that the cut was too small; it did not reflect the overall economic downturn. The "pro-democracy" parties have been largely silent on these disputes, again because there is no political capital here.

Hong Kong's economy has long since recovered, but the minimum wage has not been increased to its pre-crisis level. The fact that the number of directly elected seats in the legislature has been increased since the last election (from eighteen to twenty out of sixty) does not seem to have helped domestic workers. In October 1999, the Hong Kong Progressive Alliance legislator Choy So-yuk told the financial secretary that domestic workers should have 20 percent of their salaries deducted for using government services. The government has not responded, and it seems fortunate for domestic workers that its officials are not more accountable to "the people."

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Should Foreign Domestic Workers Be Given Equal Rights?

Hong Kong and Singapore are radically imperfect regimes, but citizenship still entails a wide range of benefits denied to foreign resident workers: valuable passports, access to subsidized public housing, health care, education, a certain degree of political representation, and so on. So the normative question remains: should the foreigners be put on the road to citizenship, as liberal democratic theorists advocate? Focusing once again on the case of Filipina domestic workers, I argue that the answer isn't so easy.

The standard justification for unequal rights is that Filipina domestic workers consent to the arrangement that brings them to Singapore and Hong Kong. Restrictions on the rights of domestic workers are publicly announced, and Filipinas know about them before they come. Why do they come? Many workers are mothers who seek relatively high-paying jobs as domestic workers abroad so that their children can be better educated and lead more comfortable lives. But poverty at home may not be the only motivating factor. Many workers, as Janet Henshall Momsen notes, "are seeking adventure, freedom, independence, education, training, and. . .upward mobility."

The problem with this argument, as Joseph Carens points out, is that

> every plausible moral view sets limits to consent. For example, no liberal democratic state permits people to sell their organs or to sell themselves into slavery. It is no doubt true, given the conditions in the world today, that many immigrants would readily agree to severe restrictions on their rights, even including terms of indentured servitude. But consent alone cannot legitimate that sort of arrangement. There are standards of fairness and justice beyond actual consent for assessing the ways in which states treat their own citizens and others.

Still, it is difficult to compare the work of Filipina domestic workers to "indentured servitude." In both Singapore and Hong Kong they can return home whenever they want. The choice, in most cases, is between low-paying jobs at home and (relatively) high-paying jobs

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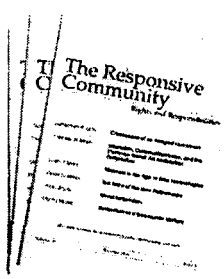

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as foreign migrant workers. (A domestic worker in Hong Kong earns much more than a low-level civil servant in the Philippines.) Arguably, consent is a good prima facie argument for justifying particular arrangements of this kind; one needs powerful reasons to "trump" it. Consider some possibilities.

One argument might be that "one-off" consent, while sufficient to legitimize market transactions, cannot justify the subjugation of foreign resident workers. For one thing, foreign workers do not simply sign contracts with their employers; they have another "boss"—the state in which they live and work. As Michael Walzer puts it in *Spheres of Justice*,

> These guests [foreign resident workers] experience the state as a pervasive and frightening power that shapes their lives and regulates their every move—and never asks for their opinion. Departure is only a formal option; deportation, a continuous threat. As a group, they constitute a disenfranchised class. They are typically an exploited or oppressed class as well, and they are exploited or oppressed at least in part because they are disenfranchised, incapable of organizing effectively for self-defense. Their material condition is unlikely to be improved except by altering their political status.

STILL, CONSENT matters if both "bosses" stick to the terms of their agreement. In Singapore and Hong Kong, many of the publicized cases of abuse relate to employers who fail to do that—for example, by physically or sexually abusing domestic workers—but few if any employers publicly justify violating their contracts. The state, however, is less bound by previous consent; as I've already noted, the Hong Kong government reduced the minimum wage, and Filipina domestic workers had to "take it or leave [the country]." Given the power of the state unilaterally to change the terms of its contract, the argument for consent does not seem so persuasive.

Even if the state abides by its agreements, one might ask whether foreign resident workers should be indefinitely bound by original consent. They may discover new possibilities, learn about unexpected problems, compare their situation with migrant workers in other countries, and realize that they were given a raw deal that needs to be challenged. At the very least, they may want to campaign for changes that would apply to the next batch of migrant workers. This helps to explain why, for example, many domestic workers' NGOs in Hong Kong are campaigning for higher salaries, an end to the "two-week rule," and more severe punishment for employers who mistreat domestic workers (in Singapore, the grievances run much deeper, but it is difficult for migrant workers to articulate their demands). In short, we have good reasons to doubt that domestic workers consent to the exact terms that brought them to Hong Kong and Singapore. In both territories, many domestic workers believe that the state should do more to improve their conditions.

But this belief does not usually translate into the demand for equal rights. It is striking that, compared to "guest workers" in Europe and immigrants in North America, domestic workers in Singapore and Hong Kong are not making this demand. Yes, they are the victims of many injustices, and they are actively campaigning for better conditions, but it rarely goes any further than that. They may not be satisfied with the status quo, but they do not (seem to) publicly ask for political equality. At some basic level, perhaps, Filipinas (and other) domestic workers really do consent to unequal rights. Is there a sufficiently powerful reason to "trump" this consent?

One possibility is that foreign domestic workers are subject to coercion; they are forced to accede to the current arrangements and are fearful about articulating or even contemplating an alternative. In a just world, free from coercion, they would be pushing for equal rights, and the state would be morally required to grant their demand. But is it really coercion that explains this (apparent) lack of interest in equal rights?

If "guest workers" in Europe or long-term immigrants in North America were to refrain from articulating the demand for citizenship, one might be tempted to explain this by referring to fear or false consciousness. The situation of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong and Singapore is not exactly comparable, however. For one thing, both Hong Kong and Singapore are small, crowded territories where

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the cost of living is very high—not ideal locations for establishing long-term "homes." Even the locals frequently move abroad when they have the means to do so. Whereas most immigrant workers in, say, the United States or Canada aim to establish roots in their new "homeland," the large majority of Filipina domestic workers plan to return home once they have earned enough money.

Another key difference is that guest workers in Europe are given longer visas for certain jobs and are allowed to bring their families. Their children often learn the language and culture of their resident country and develop the desire to stay there. Even if their parents consented to return home, the consent of parents cannot be construed as the consent of the children. No doubt, many parents want to stay in their new country for the sake of their children. In contrast, Filipina domestic workers come to Hong Kong and Singapore without their families and rarely make an effort to learn the local culture and way of life (though some do learn the local languages).

It is difficult to dispel the suspicion that coercion must play some role when Filipina domestic workers "consent" to unequal rights. More rights are better than less, and it seems irrational not to want more. Given the choice, some Filipina domestic workers might well choose to settle down in Hong Kong or Singapore. Even those who plan to return to the Philippines because of emotional ties to family and native land may change their minds; surely they would prefer to be given the choice of membership on the basis of equal rights. So why not ask for equal rights?

THE MAIN reason is that the locals would never agree to this demand, and it may be counterproductive even to raise it. Let us focus now on Hong Kong. Urban areas in the territory are already among the most crowded on earth. Land is expensive, and decent housing is beyond the reach of most people; the government provides massively subsidized housing for more than half the population. There is a waiting list of five to seven years that would extend even further if foreign workers were given equal rights and allowed to join the queue. This would be an obvious source of discontent among locals.

In addition to practical obstacles, there are also questions of fairness. To control population growth and prevent Hong Kong from being "flooded" with relatively impoverished mainland Chinese "compatriots," there are strict border controls between Hong Kong and mainland China (the functional equivalent of an international border). Although the majority of the population in Hong Kong arguably benefits from this arrangement, some families in Hong Kong cannot sponsor their own family members as immigrants. For example, the children of mainland Chinese academics working in Hong Kong do not have the right of residence in the territory. Recently, the Hong Kong government has been fighting hard to prevent mainland Chinese not born in Hong Kong, even if they have close relatives in the territory, from getting residence rights. From the perspective of Hong Kong residents with relatives on the mainland, it would seem unfair if the Hong Kong government were to grant permanent residence to Filipina domestic workers who have no relatives in the territory.

In short, it is almost inconceivable that Hong Kong would grant permanent residence or equal rights to the hundred and fifty thousand Filipina domestic workers, even if only a minority actually took up the offer. In fact, the only reason that so many are allowed to work in Hong Kong is that all sides assume they will eventually return home. In Canada, by way of comparison, foreign domestic workers can become permanent residents after two years, but the government can afford to be relatively generous because it only lets in a few thousand such workers every year—in 1996, for example, only 1,710 were admitted under the Live-in Caregiver Program. So Filipinas generally refrain from raising the demand for equal rights because they know it is a non-starter. Were they to raise this issue, "populist" politicians would propose replacing Filipinas with contract domestic workers from Indonesia or mainland China. (The Filipinas have the comparative advantage that they usually speak English well—a language that many Hong Kong parents want their children to learn—but this factor can be outweighed by others once the "cost" becomes too high.) Or else the government would re-

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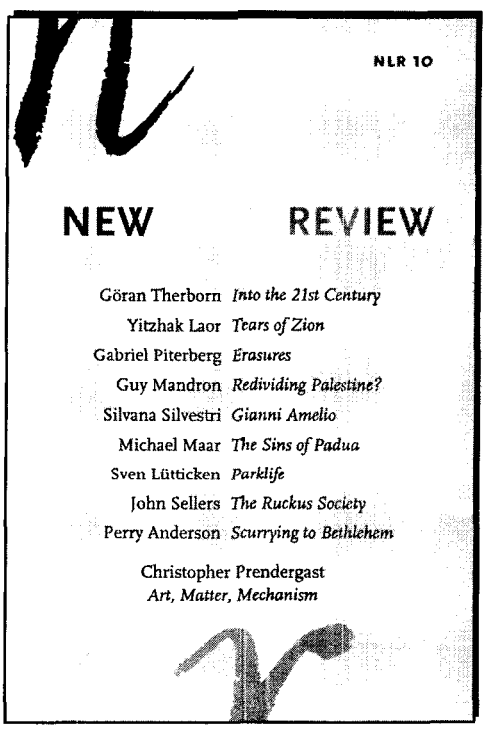

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duce the need for domestic workers by establishing publicly subsidized day care, currently unavailable in Hong Kong. For Filipina domestic workers, it seems, the feasible alternatives to unequal rights are considerably worse.

NOTWITHSTANDING the consent of foreign resident workers, liberal democratic theorists may still argue that the situation is unjust. The institutionalization of second-class membership—permanent unequal legal rights for citizens and foreign, resident workers—is a violation of basic liberal-democratic principles and should never be allowed, no matter what the circumstances. Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that policy makers in Hong Kong and Singapore are persuaded by this view. The laws are changed, and all foreign resident workers are automatically entitled to equal citizenship following a period of, say, seven years. Filipina domestic workers are permitted to settle down in Hong Kong and Singapore and are given the same rights as locals. What would be the likely effect of this policy switch?

It is almost certain that the door to further immigration from the Philippines would be officially closed. I say "officially," because this policy may well open the door to substantial illegal migration from the Philippines. Filipina domestic workers may still come to Hong Kong and Singapore and "choose" to work in even more exploitative conditions without any legal protection whatsoever. As it stands, there are few illegal migrants from the Philippines in Hong Kong. (The situation is more complex in Singapore—in 1996-1997, 80 percent of Filipina domestic workers came as "tourist workers" without work permits from the Philippines, an arrangement that is legal in Singapore but is not considered so by the Philippine government.) But that may change if the legal doors to immigration are closed. Judging from the experience in the United States and Canada—where illegal employment of domestic workers from the third world is widespread—one can expect that people from impoverished countries will migrate to rich countries, with or without the legal rights to do so. Following the 1997-1998 economic crisis in South Korea, the government announced a

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moratorium on admitting foreign, low-skilled workers (such workers would normally have been eligible for all the rights Korean workers possess following a two year period), but this led to a large influx of illegal workers. From a normative standpoint, it is not obvious that formal equal rights for all workers combined with high rates of illegal employment of foreigners is preferable to reliance on large numbers of contract workers with legal protection but without the hope of equal rights. And, right now, those are the only feasible alternatives.

For the sake of argument, once again, let's assume that illegal immigration can be controlled. It is then worth considering the effect on people in the Philippines of granting equal rights to Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong and Singapore. The most likely effect would be to close off further emigration. This would mean that many young Filipinas would lose the opportunity to work abroad to support themselves and family members. The country's economy as a whole would suffer as well—Hong Kong's Filipinas make the fourth biggest contribution of remittances to the Philippines, a total of U.S.$116 million in the year to October 2000 (the remittances of Filipinos living or working overseas account for nearly 8 percent of the country's gross national product).

Of course, the situation would not be so dire if Hong Kong and Singapore increased foreign aid to the Philippines so as to help develop that country's economy. But there is no reason to expect that this will happen, and the experience of other countries does not provide grounds for optimism. Canada has recently increased its standards of education and experience for immigrant domestic workers, with the consequence that the poorest and least-skilled domestic workers have fewer opportunities to come in, but this has not been accompanied by increased aid to the third world. (In fact, the proportion of Canadian foreign aid to the third world has been substantially reduced in recent years.) Even if Hong Kong and Singapore were to increase foreign aid, this would not necessarily (or even probably) translate into an improvement of the economy of the Philippines to the point that its people would not need to consider working abroad. It

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is far from certain that channeling foreign aid to (often corrupt) government officials would do more to benefit the people of the Philippines than direct remittances from family members working abroad.

Theoretical Implications

Most liberal democratic theorists write as though justice applies only within the nation-state. Justice is realized once meaningful rights are given to free and equal citizens. Thus, much theorizing about justice is carried out with the liberal democratic context in mind, and the interests of third world peoples fade into the background.

Thinkers on the political left, however, must also worry about our extensive obligations to relatively deprived people in foreign lands. If it turns out that a policy of equal rights for all resident workers in rich countries has negative implications for people in poor countries, this should be a source of concern. By drawing on the case of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong and Singapore, I've tried to suggest that these are not simply the abstract musings of a jaded leftist. The condition of Filipina domestic workers can be criticized on many grounds, and the relevant governments can and should do more for their interests. But, practically, putting them on the road to citizenship may well worsen their overall situation—if not for Filipinas currently working in Hong Kong and Singapore, then for people still in the Philippines, who would be denied the opportunity to improve their living standards.

Let me then put forward the following hypothesis: Unequal rights between citizens and foreign resident workers may be tolerated if this arrangement (1) works to the benefit of foreign resident workers (as decided by the workers themselves), (2) creates opportunities for people in relatively impoverished societies to improve their lives, and if (3) there are no feasible alternative ways to serve the ends identified in (1) and (2). I don't mean to suggest that well-off citizens in rich Western countries should open their lands (and homes) to contract domestic workers from the third world; there are certainly reasons to feel queasy about that. But in the absence of other effective measures to deal with global inequalities, this may be a practical alternative that can't be rejected by reference to some higher principle. ●

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Public Schools and The American Dream

In the years to follow, I hope we will dedicate ourselves as a nation to giving all our children the world-class education they need. There is no challenge more important.
—President Bill Clinton, 2000

There is no greater test of our national responsibility than the quality of the education we provide.
—Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore, 2000

We have a great national opportunity — to ensure that every child, in every public school, is challenged by high standards. . .[t]o build a culture of achievement that matches the optimism and aspirations of our country.
—Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush, 2000

Jennifer Hochschild

IT IS NO coincidence that the president and the candidates were echoing one another in the fall of last year; they were reflecting public opinion as well as deep values held by almost all Americans.* Throughout the 1990s, most Americans agreed that education is "the most important problem facing the nation," or "most important in [my] vote for president," or one of "the most important factors in determining how a child grows up." Even the *Economist* lectured Britain's former subjects that the new American president "will have to get to grips with the public education system. This is America's last best chance to tackle" what it called the "failure" of public education.

Citizens, politicians, and journalists are right about the importance of schooling. Education increasingly determines a person's job prospects and income. It has more and more influence on whom one will marry. Its impact is more important than anything else (possibly excepting wealth) in determining whether one participates in politics, what one believes politically, and how much political influence one has. It is the arena in which the United States has sought to deal with racial domination and class hierarchy, to turn immigrants into Americans, to turn children into responsible citizens, to create and maintain democracy—or at least its semblance. Public education is, in short, the place where Americans seek to transform the ideology of the American dream into practice.

The American dream is the promise that all who live in the United States have a reasonable chance to achieve success as they understand it (material or otherwise) through their own efforts and resources. Equal opportunity to become unequal, to succeed (or fail) because of what one does, not who one is, is a central part of the American dream.

The American dream is a brilliant ideological invention, although its realization is considerably less impressive. The institutions, practices, and ideas in which it is embodied encourage each person in the United States to pursue success *and* create the framework within which everyone can do that. They hold each person responsible for achieving his or her own dreams, while generating the shared value of the equal chance. They hold out a vision of

*This article is an overview of much of the forthcoming book by Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick, tentatively titled *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

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both individual success and collective good.

Public schools in this country are the central institutions for bringing both parts of the dream into practice. Schools are expected to teach children enough so that they can choose their own vision of success and then to give them the skills they need to pursue that vision—and they are also expected to incorporate all students into the polity and give them the habits and values needed to maintain a democratic government. The American public widely endorses both of these goals and supports public education and pays for it at a fairly high level.

However, the goals of the American dream sometimes conflict; what is (or seems to be) good for the individual might not be good for society as a whole and vice versa. Because schools are so important to the way the dream works, and because of their cost, debates over education policy have always been contentious.

The list of such fights over just the past few decades is long: school desegregation, finance equalization, vouchers, bilingual education, special education, high-stakes testing, tracking, Afrocentric curricula, the teaching of evolution. These are partly, of course, debates over pedagogy, but they have much more of an edge than that. Contests over school finance and reform, like contests over separating students by race, language proficiency, academic talent, or disability usually revolve around the importance of individual success for a comparatively privileged group of students versus the collective good of all students or of the nation as a whole. In cases such as Afrocentrism or creationism, citizens use arguments over schooling to challenge the validity of the American dream itself or its value for particular groups of Americans.

The nature of schooling is shaped by these conflicts. Because most Americans believe in the collective values of the American dream—equal opportunity, respect for those who are different, upholding the responsibilities of democratic citizenship—public schools have made real progress toward enabling all students to pursue their dreams and toward promoting a democratic polity. Compared with four decades ago, dropout rates have declined; children with disabilities are in school buildings rather than human warehouses; resources are more equally distributed; black children are not required by law to attend inferior schools for fewer hours a day and shorter school years than white children; achievement scores are up; and gaps between the achievement of Anglo and black or Latino children have declined.

Yet this progress is limited. Efforts to promote equal opportunity and democracy hit almost insuperable barriers when enough people believe that those efforts will endanger the comparative advantage of their own children or children like theirs. At that point, a gap arises between what most Americans believe and what they are actually willing to do over the long term. Thus Hispanics and inner-city students still drop out much more frequently than others; achievement scores have changed little since 1990; the gap between black and white students actually rose in the course of the nineties. Some urban schools seem to teach nothing despite the valiant efforts of many of their teachers and students; and achievement gaps between affluent and poor students have barely budged or even grown. Most important, while life chances depend increasingly on attaining higher education, the percentage of people completing college has pretty much stalled since the 1970s, and class background is almost as important as ever in determining who attends and finishes college.

THE GAP between what Americans believe and what they are willing to do also generates policies that are irrational, in the sense that they are inconsistent with or not based on available evidence. At times, policymakers have abandoned proven reforms; desegregation, for example, enhanced the life chances of many African-American students and did not hurt white students, but the movement to complete the desegregation process has been largely inactive for the last twenty-five years. School finance reform broadens opportunities for poor children without harming those who are better off, but equity in funding has depended mostly on the intermittent intervention of the courts. At other times, policymakers have adopted reforms for which there is no strong empirical support. Despite mixed evidence (at best) for the benefits of separating students according to academic

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achievement or language ability, the first of these practices is almost universal and the latter is widespread. And charter schools or public-private choice programs have been widely advocated without convincing evidence that they make any difference at all.

How to explain irrational policymaking? Public officials have at least partly accepted the claim that pursuing the collective goals of the American dream would endanger the individual achievement of children in the majority or privileged sectors. Or they have been persuaded that some panacea exists that would promote the collective good while retaining the privileges of the well-off. Under pressure, policymakers have been willing to sacrifice the wider objectives or put them at risk for the sake of the narrower ones, whether or not there is good evidence that the two are in conflict.

THIS IRRATIONALITY is most apparent when it comes to reforms that could have the greatest impact and that have the soundest research support. Where it has been tried, educating poor children *with* students who are more privileged or educating them *like* students who are more privileged has improved their performance and long-term chance of success. Quality preschool, individual reading instruction, small classes in the early grades, and consistently challenging academic courses have been shown to help disadvantaged children achieve, just as they enable middle-class children to achieve. Similarly, it helps all students to have peers who take school seriously, behave in ways that help them learn, and are backed by parents who will complain and organize if the school does not do its best to educate their children. Most important, qualified, knowledgeable teachers make a difference. Well-off children almost always attend schools that have most of these features; poor children too frequently do not.

An honest attempt to secure a good education for poor children therefore leaves policymakers with two difficult choices. They can, ideally, send them to schools in wealthier neighborhoods. Or they can, as a plausible second best, seek to give them an education in their own neighborhoods that has the features of schooling for well-off students. The former has proved to be too expensive politically, and the latter has often been too expensive financially. Americans want all children to have a real chance to learn, and they want all schools to foster democracy and promote the common good, but they do not want these things enough to make them happen.

Demography and history further widen the gap between belief in the American dream and willingness to put it into practice. In the United States, class is intimately connected with race and immigration. Legal racial discrimination has been abolished, but prejudice and racial hierarchy remain, and racial or ethnic inequities reinforce class disparities. The overlap adds more difficulties to the already difficult relationship between individual and collective goals, in large part because it adds anxieties about diversity and citizenship to concerns about opportunity and competition.

Conflicts over schooling choices will never be resolved, because they spring from a paradox at the core of the American dream. Most Americans believe that everyone has the right to pursue success but that only some deserve to win, based on their talents, energy, or ambition. The American dream is egalitarian at the starting point in the "race of life" but not at the end. This is not the central paradox, but simply the ideological choice that sets it up. The paradox lies in the fact that one generation's finish is the next generation's start. People who succeed get to keep the fruits of their labor and use them as they wish. If they buy a home where the schools are better and the children are like their own or if they invest more in making their children's schools better, their children will have a head start and other children will fall behind through no fault of their own. Schools are supposed to equalize opportunities across generations and to create democratic citizens out of each generation, but people naturally wish to give their own children an economic head start or political protection, and some can do it. But some can't. This circle cannot be squared.

Thus public schools are essential to make the American dream work, but schools are also the arena in which many Americans first fail. Failure there almost certainly guarantees failure from then on. In the dream, failure re-

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sults from lack of individual merit and effort; in reality, failure in school too closely tracks structures of racial and class inequality. Schools too often reinforce rather than contend against the intergenerational paradox at the heart of the American dream. That is understandable but not acceptable.

THIS ARGUMENT has implications for many school policies. Implementing the American dream in public schools will never lead to equality, but it could promote greater fairness. Our recommendations mostly suggest ways to bolster the collective goals—equal opportunity, diversity, training for democratic citizenship—in the face of powerful parental commitment to the individual goals. We expect readers of *Dissent* to agree with our underlying end and with most of our proposals, but we anticipate that many will reject one or another of them. We believe, however, that our positions are internally consistent and represent the best means of promoting the American dream for *all* Americans and for the nation as a whole.

School desegregation was Americans' most sustained effort in the twentieth century to address the evils of racial domination in public schooling. The endeavor epitomized the ideals of the American dream and revealed its most intractable internal conflicts.

School desegregation was implemented widely, and it largely succeeded in educational terms where it was actually practiced. Both white and black students are much more likely to attend school with students of the other race now than they were in 1960; this is, ironically, especially true in the South. Schools have indeed become more racially separated over the past twenty years, but much of the desegregation that occurred earlier remains in place. There is no evidence that whites were harmed by desegregation, and plenty of evidence that they gained in test scores, high school graduation, and college attendance during the period of greatest integration. Where desegregation was reasonably implemented, black students also gained academically as measured by test scores, years of schooling, and likelihood of attending and graduating from college. In most cases, members of both races became more comfortable with each other, more likely to work in desegregated settings as adults, more likely to claim friends of the other race, and more likely to support further forms of desegregation.

School desegregation has mostly failed in political terms, though. Courts are systematically dismantling desegregation plans now in place—even when increased racial separation would result. Most segregation now occurs across district lines rather than within school districts, and there is virtually no support for district consolidation or redrawing of district lines. Except in a very few cases, neither blacks nor whites (nor Latinos or Asians) are pushing for desegregation.

In short, school desegregation could have been a widespread educational success but was halted by political opposition. This effort to achieve the collective good by equalizing opportunity and teaching all students how to be democratic citizens was not able to win out against fears for individual success, first for white students and eventually for black students. For pragmatic reasons, I do not argue for major efforts to mandate desegregation as a way to achieve the individual or collective goals of public schooling in the foreseeable future.

When reformers realized that they could anticipate little more change in racial inequalities in schooling, they shifted their attention to class inequalities. The Supreme Court declined to find a national constitutional right to equal or adequate school funding, so reformers turned to the states. As of now, more than forty states have addressed questions of *school finance reform,* and more than half of these have changed their funding formulas during the past few decades.

The results are considerable, but not completely successful either financially or substantively. In states with court orders to which legislatures have responded, all public schools received greater increases in funding compared with schools in most other states, and districts are more equally funded. Still, more than half of the states have not redistributed school resources in any substantial way, large gaps between wealthy and poor districts persist even in states that have implemented finance reform, and the largest gaps of all occur between wealthy and poor states.

Has school finance reform improved the

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quality and outcomes of schooling? This question has generated a substantial scholarly debate with no definitive resolution. Nevertheless, raising teachers' salaries, enhancing their training and professional development, instituting small classes in the early grades, creating high-quality preschools, providing tutoring and other individualized instruction where appropriate, improving the curriculum—substantial evidence shows that all of these changes *do* make a difference in outcomes for students, especially poor students. And all of them cost a lot of money. Parents intuitively know that; homebuyers who can afford to do so are willing to pay a substantial premium to buy houses in districts that spend a lot on their schools.

In my view, further school finance equalization is essential. As with school desegregation, most Americans agree in principle. But they resist in practice: few are willing to accept even a minimal risk to their own children's prospects for the sake of the collective goals of equal opportunity and a well-educated citizenry. There is new evidence that it could take considerably more money in deeply poor school districts than in middle-class ones to give all children an equal opportunity to gain from their schooling. I hold little hope that many Americans will subordinate the individual side of the American dream to the collective side to anywhere near this extent.

IF STATES WILL not transfer enough students or resources to ensure that every child enjoys a middle-class education, we need to turn our attention to *other kinds of school reform.* After a long history of seeking to improve various components of schooling, reformers now focus increasingly on systemic school reform. Its most visible and controversial element is "standards," sometimes measured by high-stakes testing.

Standards-based reforms require that all students (including those in bilingual or special education) be held accountable for learning skills and information specified by their state and increasingly measured by a set of tests that they must pass before promotion or graduation. Standards and their accompanying tests may be extensive or narrow, precisely objective or broadly subjective, designed to hold back only those below a low threshold or to require "higher-order thinking," focused only on student accountability or also on teacher and school accountability, and so on. They may penalize students who have learning problems or who have been subjected to years of atrocious teaching, or they may inspire students and educators alike to focus on learning, address areas of weakness, and attend to students of all ability levels and all races or ethnic groups. This is truly a case where implementation matters, and the devil is in the details.

I endorse standards that cover a wide array of subjects and hold all students at all grade levels to high expectations, so long as students alone are not held accountable and so long as they are given the resources needed to learn. Absent efforts to create standards, teach to them, and then measure learning and respond to the measurement, too many students—especially those who are poor, black or Hispanic, non-native English speakers, or in special education—have been allowed or forced to slide through their schooling without learning much of anything. Providing teachers and administrators as well as students with the materials they need, giving unsuccessful students enough time and sustained attention to make up for past neglect, and *only* then, if ever, penalizing educators and students for unnecessary failure and rewarding them for success should enhance opportunities for all students. The National Academy of Sciences, among other groups, has identified criteria for ensuring that all students are helped rather than punished by standards-based reforms. Given such protections, "the battle over standards and accountability is a continuation of the civil rights struggle. Standards and accountability expose the sham that passes for education in many heavily minority schools and provide measurements and pressure to prod schools to target resources where they are needed most," in the words of civil rights lawyer William Taylor.

Properly implemented standards and testing will enhance the public good, increase the chances of individual poor and nonwhite children to pursue success, and do nothing to harm the chances of all other children. For this reason, I cautiously support some elements of the education reform bills recently passed by the

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U.S. House and Senate and promoted by President Bush. The pending legislation has plenty of traps, hence caution is warranted. There is a good deal more emphasis on testing than on providing resources to help students pass the tests. And at this writing there is a strong possibility that states will be permitted to meet their testing goals by boosting the scores of (mostly white) middle-class children while allowing poor (disproportionately nonwhite) children to fail or drop out, and so on. But the underlying premise—that schools need to demonstrate success in enabling all students to learn, not just to show that they have tried to teach—seems exactly right. Again, the devil is in the details.

One of the controversies swirling around standards-based reform focuses on *who* should be included in high-stakes testing. This is a special case of a broader set of issues having to do with *separation of students with particular characteristics* from other students. Proponents of separation argue that special education students and English learners will do best in separate classes that attend to their particular needs, at least for part of their schooling. I, however, side with those who oppose separation except in unusual cases. That implies that most special education students should be "mainstreamed" in regular classes and that most students with limited English proficiency should join English-speaking classes.

THESE ARE controversial positions, but they are more closely aligned with the American dream in public schooling than are separationist policies. Throughout American history, separate education has almost always meant unequal education; students who remain outside regular classes too often suffer stigma and receive grossly inadequate schooling from poorly qualified and ill-paid teachers. Special education and bilingual education have frequently been vehicles for racial, ethnic, class, and gender-based segregation. There is no persuasive evidence that separation improves schooling outcomes for the students involved. Even in the best teaching circumstances, students who are separated—as well as all other students—lose the chance to experience diversity in their classroom and to learn respect for and accommodation of those with different skills, backgrounds, competencies, and perspectives. They thus miss crucial training for democratic citizenship.

Inclusion in regular classrooms is not a money-saving device. Students with special needs and English learners will often require classroom aides; teachers and possibly parents and other students will need training; curricula and pedagogy may have to be changed. (These changes may themselves benefit all students, not just those with distinctive needs.) Nor should inclusion be a blanket policy with no exceptions. The courts have ruled that if inclusion is too costly, too harmful to other students, or too detrimental to the social or educational development of the student in question, separation is appropriate. But both the individual and the collective goals of the American dream are best promoted by assuming that, absent strong evidence to the contrary, students should be included in regular classrooms rather than taught separately.

Tracking or ability grouping raises the broadest issue of inclusion and separation. Rigid tracking across all subjects for many years of schooling probably harms most students and benefits, at most, only a few; thankfully, schools increasingly abjure it, at least officially. It is not defensible in a democratic polity.

More flexible ability grouping is harder to judge. Most case studies show that it is racially or ethnically discriminatory; most quantitative analyses show little or no racial discrimination *per se* but much class-based discrimination. Even more problematically, analysts and educators can reach no empirically based consensus on who benefits and who is harmed by ability grouping. Too much evidence shows that the worst teachers, most uninspired and unchallenging curricula, and lowest expectations are visited on children in the lowest groups, and the best resources flow disproportionately to the children in the highest groups. But evidence does not show clearly whether ability grouping in itself would be problematic or beneficial to most students *if* all the things that encourage learning were more evenly distributed across the groups.

Significant detracking is not politically feasible in most school districts; middle-class families of all races and ethnic groups would

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block it or leave the public schools. It also may not always be educationally appropriate; no educator should endorse a system in which both the highest- and lowest-ability students will be bored, anxious, or intimidated in class. But ability grouping is not the right general starting point for a society based on the American dream. The ideal solution might be heterogeneous classrooms in which the teachers have the training and curricular materials to challenge all students—but that will take decades and a significant improvement in the quality of teaching. An acceptable interim solution in my view combines several strategies—minimal grouping (at most) in grade schools, only slightly more grouping (especially in math) in middle schools, and more extensive grouping that is as flexible as possible in high schools. Educators should concentrate on raising the floor and opening access to the ceiling by ensuring that all grade-schoolers can read and compute, providing algebra for all middle school students, creating challenging classes for all high school students, redistributing the best teachers and making the most promising curricular innovations available to all, eliminating all bias in assignments, and maintaining high expectations for all students with extensive support services as needed.

That these sound like prescriptions for standards-based reform is not a coincidence. These are the changes that would enhance the chances of the worst-off children (while reassuring the others so they remain in the public system), increase diversity within classrooms, and improve training for democratic citizenship. They will also help all students to learn at high levels.

I have said nothing so far about *school choice* because I see it as the least important of the current educational issues in dispute in the United States. That seems an odd statement given the political visibility of contests over vouchers and the growing enthusiasm for charter schools. But fewer than twenty thousand students are in publicly funded voucher programs—less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the students in public schools, fewer than one-fifth of those being homeschooled—and we see no clear indication that those numbers will increase much. Vouchers have the peculiar characteristic of being politically damaging to both major political parties. Many (in some surveys, a majority) of the natural constituents of the Democratic Party endorse voucher experiments; that includes African-Americans, the young, the poor, parents of school-aged children, and city residents. But Democratic leaders and constituencies such as teachers' unions oppose such experiments. The ideological home of the voucher movement is among Republican Party elites. But many—probably most—of the natural constituents of the Republican Party oppose any voucher experiment that would bring poor urban students of color into "their" schools. Not a single suburb has responded to educators', judges', and legislators' repeated pleas to join the Cleveland voucher program. Nor do any participate in the plan in Milwaukee, the only other publicly funded urban voucher program. So despite their preferences for markets, many Republican activists have ducked the issue. Vouchers and related plans have lost overwhelmingly in a dozen statewide referenda over the past few decades, have never come close to succeeding in Congress, and have almost always been defeated in state legislatures.

Public school choice is more promising, to the degree that it brings energetic and idealistic reformers into the public school system, keeps well-off families in public schools, enhances the chances of poor students in dismal urban schools, and enables all students and teachers to find an environment with an appropriate learning style for them. Charter schools may on balance decrease diversity of all kinds, but the evidence is too thin so far to be certain; if it turns out that they do, then we must once again set priorities among the goals of public education. But at this point experimentation seems appropriate.

The most compelling arguments for choice have been made on behalf of children trapped in failing schools. If a voucher program permitted urban children to attend schools in wealthier (and whiter) districts, it would increase racial and class integration for all students as well as the chances for individual success of poor, predominantly nonwhite children. But if the previous paragraph is correct, the politics of choice will resemble the politics of desegregation: most middle-class whites pro-

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fess belief and few are willing to participate. Furthermore, the number of private schools is small, and their capacity to accommodate additional students is very limited. So is their willingness to participate, in many cases. Once again, a major reform proposal—this time from the right rather than the left—will sputter out because too many Americans fear its impact on the achievement of their own children.

Disputes over how to promote the American dream in public schools will never be resolved because of the intergenerational paradox. But the disputes can be more or less fierce, and the collective goals can attain more or less balance with the relentless drive for individual advantage. The crucial question that we now face is whether the tension among the goals of schooling can move any closer toward resolution as the makeup of American society changes, and with it, the social order.

THE CHANGING profile of Americans is reflected first in the public schools; Hispanic children already outnumber African-American children by several million. At present, not quite 13 percent of Americans are over sixty-five. By 2025, aging baby boomers will make that figure roughly 20 percent. At the same time, the Anglo proportion of Americans is projected to become smaller, decreasing from 70 percent in 2000 to about 60 percent in 2025 and close to 50 percent in 2050. The Latino population will double, reaching perhaps a quarter of all Americans. (These figures ignore racial and ethnic intermarriage.) Immigrants, especially those from Latin America, are younger than the average American and have larger families, so the school-aged population will grow at the same time that the elderly population is growing.

A larger and more diverse school population, combined with a larger and relatively homogeneous elderly population, could create a series of difficult policy dilemmas. The need for schooling for the young will be great at the same time that the demand for health care and social services for the elderly will peak. The potential for social division—across generations, races, classes, and systems of belief—will be very high. Will political leaders inflame these divisions or seek to ameliorate them?

Some political actors will no doubt yield to the temptation for demagoguery. But others might take a different stance. As they become more secure in the peculiarities of American politics, leaders of different ethnic groups will be better able to look for coalitions rather than focus on competition. And with the potential for social and political chaos so great, it is just possible that more Americans will want their leaders on the high road rather than in the swamp; in that case, (some) candidates may see a winning strategy in promoting the values of participation, respect, and equal opportunity. As in the decades around the turn of the last century, the large and growing group of immigrants themselves have had the experience of exclusion combined with a strong desire to become Americans; for them the collective and the individual goals of schooling could be joined. As in the New Deal era, a large and growing group of new Americans may think of themselves as disadvantaged or feel sympathy with the disadvantaged, without being totally embittered. (Hispanics in California, for example, are much more likely than others to place themselves among the "have nots" and to agree that "the government should do more to make sure that all Californians have an equal opportunity to succeed.") They too may turn to the schools for help, for others as well as themselves.

Class issues will remain the most difficult barriers to progress, and ethnic and racial issues will not go away. For better and for worse, the intergenerational paradox embedded in the ideology of the American dream, as well as the ennobling vision it sometimes represents, will continue to shape public schooling in the United States. If poor and non-Anglo children are not given enough resources, fair access to good teachers, and connections with the rest of society, the ideology of the American dream will be just a cover for systematic injustice. But we have an opportunity to create schools that embody the dream at its generous best rather than its hypocritical worst. ●

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Head Start: Vision and Reality

Katie Terezakis

HEAD START was born in a state of contradiction that thirty-six years of struggle and reform have failed to overcome. Conceived in the Office of Economic Opportunity, which was established in 1965 to "eliminate poverty in the United States," Head Start was to be the palatable spearhead in the OEO's extensive plans to open up poor communities to social action programs aimed at adults.

Maximum Feasible Participation

Early OEO director Sargent Shriver hit upon the idea of a summer school and pre-kindergarten for poor children as the OEO was struggling against the suspicion of paternalism its other programs aroused, as well as against the misgivings of conservative journalists and politicians, who were apprehensive about what they considered to be the OEO's radical agenda. At a time when other OEO programs were receiving bad press, Shriver's plan was to implement a program that would advance underprivileged three and four year olds to a level of educational readiness on par with their middle-class counterparts, while providing their families with health services, job training, and other resources. Given the climate of the civil rights movement, increasing concern with American poverty, and widely discussed studies showing the first few years of life to be crucial for later development, Shriver knew that Head Start was likely to win public support to a degree that his legal aid and other programs had not. He thought that racism clouded perceptions about welfare programs and hoped that focusing on children would alleviate its stigma.

The curriculum drafted for Head Start was meant to provide poor children with the academic stimulation and physical care every child needs to advance—it was to be a "head start" toward the learning customary for more privileged children of the same age. Its founders believed that success was only possible by involving parents in the program, which was in line with the OEO's maxim of "maximum feasible participation." The new program would serve as a back door to bring the poor into community action programs. Not only would parents come to know the OEO through Head Start involvement, but their children's continued positive development after Head Start would be ensured by the impact of that involvement on the parents themselves. But the nature of parent participation was a matter of debate between those who thought that parents needed to acquire childcare and homemaking skills and those who held that they should be equal partners in the administration of the program. The resulting ambivalence was reflected in Head Start literature and policy manuals, which were heavy on calls for parents' involvement and vague about the ways parents might actually become involved.

Still, even Shriver was surprised at how quickly Head Start acquired public support; in the first summer, hundreds of volunteers and OEO workers set up more than two thousand centers serving more than five hundred thousand children. Lady Bird Johnson became Head Start's national spokeswoman, and Donna Reed, the television mother of the day, made pubic service announcements encouraging people to volunteer. Lady Bird inaugurated Head Start in a Rose Garden tea party attended by socialites and politician's wives that was covered on the society pages, but not in political reporting. When Head Start did make news, discussions focused on the cycles of cultural deprivation ingrained in poor communities and used emerging research in child psy-

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chology to argue that poor children introduced to the values of hard work could rise above the unemployment and ignorance accepted in their communities. It was precisely the focus on needy children, to the discredit of their families, that allowed Head Start to garner such enthusiasm. In lauding the value of a Head Start education, Lady Bird referred to delinquent parents unable to help their children and implied that participation in Head Start could undo the damage.

So Head Start was established, on the one hand, as a strategic way to reach adults thought to need particular services, and on the other, as a way to undo the damage those same adults were allowing (or causing) their children to suffer. Within a few years, the parental involvement encouraged by the early OEO was blamed for clashes with local schools, and a group of school superintendents complained to Congress that Head Start parents were undermining their authority. Concerns about the dollar value of Head Start's effectiveness in helping children grew, and Congress became more interested in the administration of IQ tests to Head Start children than in parental involvement—some members proposed calculating Head Start's budget allowances based upon children's IQ gains. While discussions of IQ accountability took place in Congress, the few suggestions for parents' involvement and wider community action in the Head Start handbook were deleted.

In the same way that the involvement of families in Head Start's administration and policy decisions was never achieved, so too have its promises of sweeping improvement in poor communities fallen short. Today, Head Start no longer has any connection with the OEO. It has indeed become a highly popular program, whose funding has tripled in the last ten years. Yet in its reports to Congress, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) finds that Head Start centers still have the resources to serve only 20 percent to 40 percent of eligible children in a given community. The GAO also reports the inability of Head Start centers to find health professionals and facilities in their communities at affordable costs or to retain qualified teachers (who are paid an average of $15,000 per year [1994,1998]). Given these constraints, individual Head Start centers have commonly opted to neglect parent outreach, educational seminars, and related family services in favor of admitting as many children as centers can hold, and in using the volunteer efforts of the most engaged parents for chores that require no training.

Head Start in the South Bronx

Governmental machinations over Head Start policy have had glaring microsocial and micropolitical effects on local Head Start programs. I saw firsthand the resulting pressures and disappointments during the years I worked in Head Start classrooms in a center in the South Bronx. While we struggled to meet federal demands for on-paper results, it was impossible to facilitate or fund many mandated services for the enrolled children, and we could do nothing at all for the many more on waiting lists for admission. In this center the children's bathrooms are dank and crumbling, the parent and staff bathroom door has been broken for the last six years, roaches are ever visible, and teachers' supplies and cleaning materials are regularly paid for out of pocket by the teachers themselves. For at least as long as the bathroom door has been broken, there has been a bullet hole at a child's head level in the window of one classroom's "art area." This year, the center's children were able to return to the cement playground area that sits in the middle of the city housing project where the center is located. Dug up in a stalled effort to repair and exterminate, the playground remained unusable, unfenced, and strewn with rodent poison for more than a year.

Testing for children's initial academic readiness and later academic progress regularly takes place in the center, though there are no provisions to help teachers find the time, as they must, to give tests individually. Special needs flagged by testing are seldom addressed with supplementary clinical or educational services. The "anecdotals" that teachers are required to record weekly based upon their observations of children's needs and strengths are not scheduled into their workdays and are usually dashed off during class hours or saved for just before teachers and centers are to be audited.

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Yet compared to national statistics, this particular center is relatively lucky. Two-thirds of the nation's Head Start directors report a more radical lack of suitable facilities, and more than 86 percent have insufficient qualified staff. A typical Head Start family service worker has a caseload of a hundred—three times the recommended level—which is likely to include children with developmental disabilities, children in the foster-care system, and children in families with histories of abuse. The South Bronx center, again beating the national average, has one full-day (8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.) classroom out of five. The other classes run different morning and afternoon sessions, creating chronic scheduling conflicts with working parents and those struggling to find jobs. Some parents, if they actually find jobs, must pull their children out of Head Start and place them with full-time babysitters.

Although family service workers and teachers routinely deal with families in which AIDS, domestic violence, and drug addiction are problems, they receive no formal training to address these crises or the mourning that follows them, and are left to figure out for themselves the community resources to which they are supposed to direct families. Though many parents are clearly capable of assisting in the administration of Head Start, and often volunteer for service, in this center there are no procedures in place for assessing their abilities, beyond what individual teachers and educational directors try to do on their own initiative.

Over a period of several years, I worked with six mothers of Head Start graduates who became assistants or head teachers. Three of them quit within two years, frustrated over the lack of training or support. All had been left to teach alone in classrooms that were technically required to have two teachers and, if possible, additional volunteers. Their experiences were not abnormal; personnel-related expenses make up the biggest part of Head Start's budget, and thousands of dollars can be saved by giving one untrained assistant teacher full responsibility for a classroom.

Accounting for Bush

The education bill recently passed by the Bush administration proposes to address Head Start's weaknesses by requiring particular academic results; the centers are to be judged according to the bill's new standard and scripted curriculum. The bill gives parent involvement a far lower priority than these results, implying that the two are relatively independent, and no mention is made of the development of social aptitude, which is perhaps Head Start's most significant positive effect on children's lives. Bush's plan for Head Start takes its cue from the Results Act of 1993, which focuses on "impact evaluation," the deceptively scientific term for a given program's assessment based upon a comparison of its outcome with an estimate of what might have happened in its absence.

In a report to the Senate and House of Representatives in 1998, the GAO pledged that the Results Act would finally rectify inconclusive and inconsistent appraisals of Head Start's effectiveness. In order to "improve Head Start's accountability," the act is tailored to shift the focus of federal management "from staffing, activity levels, and tasks completed toward results." Head Start centers that do not comply with the latest regulations face termination. At the time of the report, ninety programs had been terminated over four years. In language reminiscent of the earlier focus on IQ accountability, the report calls Head Start "a national laboratory for child development" and recommends that Head Start's budget be geared toward results-based evaluations. At the time of the report, however, no supplementary funding or training for the latest oversight requirements had been created, and officials complained to the GAO that "workload demands prevented [them] from submitting the reports on time."

The strict focus on impact evaluation and the accompanying curriculum and testing now facing Head Start are prescriptions for failure. Children are being set up to fail tests, the evaluation of which is left to people too overworked to do the job, and the public is being prepared for another round of propaganda about the deficits ingrained in those populations for which the government and its welfare agencies have done all they could.

The Bush plan takes the wrong direction. In the most recent and extensive study of the effects of preschools developed for the poor,

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published in May of this year in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers have shown that preschool participants, tracked over a period of fifteen years, were less likely to repeat grades, more likely to finish high school, and less likely to be arrested than nonparticipants. The study emphasizes the involvement of parents in homework assignments, the delivery of medical and social services to families, and the employment of teachers who sought students door-to-door in poor neighborhoods and continued to work closely with parents and guardians. The study finds that the academic success of children is linked to home environments and can only be furthered when resources for families are maintained. The Bush administration has already jumped on the Chicago findings to argue that with a "clear focus," language and literacy can also be improved in Head Start programs. Yet the clear focus described in the Chicago study was made possible by a program of parent involvement and a sensitivity for developing children's social aptitude, both of which are to be steam-rolled in Bush's curriculum.

Because Head Start works from within the very center of American poverty, it must address poverty's implications for children. It cannot be judged as though it were a common preschool designed only to produce academic results. Many children enter Head Start seldom having left their neighborhoods and buildings and never having had access to developmentally helpful toys, let alone "print rich" environments. Year after year, I watched children who were overwhelmed by group activities and too shy to speak with others quickly develop into engaged partners in storytelling, eager to describe art projects, and adept at negotiating the rules of moving from one activity to another. African children learned Spanish and English directives for games from their peers, and others who entered the classroom with no knowledge of English graduated not only reciting alphabets, but expert at cajoling others to explain the meaning of English words. Children who lived in crowded studio apartments with parents and other family members learned how to request quiet time in the classroom's reading and music areas. In a district almost devoid of trees, children tracked the growth of planted seeds and the blooming of plants whose every stage of maturation they called by name. Although teachers were often exhausted and frustrated, they continually brought project materials from home when the center could not provide them, worked to tailor small-group lessons to the demands of their teeming classrooms, and canvassed as much information as they could about children's home environments. The work that makes all subsequent academic study possible and that lays the foundation for children's development in the hostile environments outside of Head Start is demonstrated every day in the socialization this center achieves and the curiosity it encourages. These are outcomes not accounted for in Bush's plan, or in any obsession with testable "results" that ignores the context of poor children's academic achievement.

Still, Head Start needs a structured program resilient enough to work in widely different environments, from the Bronx to Appalachia; it needs clear objectives in guiding children and vesting their families with the resources to continue to guide them. It needs staff who are given the time, as were those in the Chicago study, to regularly visit homes and to work on particular projects with families and teachers who are paid more than poverty-level wages and are subsidized to continue their training. Many of the best ideas for improving Head Start—such as job training and seminars for parents on issues of their choosing—and the professional evaluation of special-needs children, have long been required by Head Start ordinances, but the emphasis on paper results coupled with a lack of facilitation and funding have turned them into rhetorical chimeras in most centers. When the results of a Head Start education are studied, they must be evaluated with awareness for the social aptitude gained by children and for the program's effectiveness for whole families. Evaluations must recognize children as members of families and communities capable of contributing to their education and maturation. Again, "parent councils" are already mandated for Head Start centers, but only when all parents are able to participate in them and their votes are reflected

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in Head Start policy will their potential be fully realized. This is not to say that parental involvement will significantly change the hard realities of American poverty. It will, however, allow Head Start centers to use the funds they have to become more responsive to families' needs and therefore be more effective in producing positive academic and social results for children.

Head Start can neither omit the contributions of parents to the management of individual centers, nor can it be asked to make ends meet by ignoring comprehensive training for its staff or forgoing the services of well-trained professionals. It needs more rigid accounting of academic yields far less than it needs the resources necessary to advance the intellectual and social engagement of its children. The question as to whether Head Start will produce its intended results is really the question of whether America will actually contend with the poverty through which Head Start children must make their way or will instead demand accountability for conditions we have not made it possible to surmount or even taken the time to understand. ●

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". . . democratize the sublime. . ."
—Irving Howe, The American Newness

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Reclaiming Urban Education

Norm Fruchter

WHENEVER I SPEAK to a group about education issues, I begin with a quick straw poll that asks, Do you think your grandparents got a better education than their parents? Your parents a better education than their parents? You a better education that your parents? Your children a better education than you?

All the groups vote overwhelmingly that their grandparents got a better education than their great-grandparents, their parents got a better education than their grandparents, and their own education was better than their parents'. But when groups assess the quality of their children's education, the progression ends; inevitably, more than half the room says that their children are receiving a worse education than they did.

What forces have shaped this mistaken perception of the deterioration of public education? I should say deterioration of *urban* public education, because poll after poll assures us that suburban and small-town parents and citizens are quite content with the quality of their public schools. Conservatives have turned this widespread discontent with urban education into a full-scale attack on what they call the public education monopoly, and they have made urban districts the focus of the struggle for the survival of American public education. Last spring, for example, the New York City schools chancellor attempted to turn over the management of five failing schools to the for-profit Edison Corporation. The grassroots defeat of this measure is just the opening round of what promises to be a drawn-out privatization war in New York City. In order to rebuild public will and restore our city schools so that they can effectively educate all our students, it is necessary to look at why we have so demonized urban public education, and what we might do about it.

IRONICALLY, radical advocacy for schooling reform may well have prepared some of the ground for conservative efforts to delegitimate public education. A fierce attack on the failures of urban education was launched during the 1960s by radicals, not conservatives. (Consider the early works of Herbert Kohl, Jonathan Kozol, John Hold, and Ivan Illich).

These early assaults on the core assumptions of traditional American curriculum content, instructional methods, and school organization did not assume that we had produced better outcomes for urban students in some golden past. Instead, they argued that urban schools had never effectively educated most of America's poor students and children of color, and the dismal academic outcomes in urban districts demonstrated that we didn't know how to educate the so-called minority students who were becoming majorities in most urban systems. The radical attacks were designed to puncture the aura of complacency, denial, and low expectations that shielded urban principals, superintendents, and school boards and to argue for the investment of the resources, public will, and sustained commitment necessary to improve urban outcomes. But whatever the contributions of radicals to delegitimating urban schooling, the conservative onslaught unleashed in the early years of Ronald Reagan's administration fundamentally challenged the basic premises of public education, by arguing that only marketplace solutions could produce quality schooling.

A key influence was the publication and wide-scale dissemination of *A Nation at Risk*, a tocsin sounded by a special committee selected by Terrell Bell, Reagan's first secretary

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of education. *A Nation at Risk* claimed, in its most effective metaphors, that American education was "drowning in a sea of mediocrity," and that "if a foreign invader had penetrated America's defenses, it could not do as much damage to our national well-being as our public school systems were already wreaking."

The claims that structure *A Nation at Risk's* argument about the deterioration of public education have long been exposed as inaccurate. The median years in school for all Americans has increased from 9.3 years in 1950 to 12.9 years in 1993. Our high school graduation rate has steadily increased for the past three decades, as has our college-going rate. Scholastic Aptitude Test scores declined during the 1960s and then leveled off, but the test-taking pool has expanded so enormously—and includes such a more diverse pool than the predominantly white, male, Protestant applicants of the 1950s—that the lower scores are easily explained by the breadth of the new takers. For more particulars, see the comprehensive discussions in Richard Rothstein's *The Way We Were?* and David Berliner and Bruce Biddle's *The Manufactured Crisis*.

A Nation at Risk's central argument was that because public schools were failing to produce the skills our economy and society needed, our dominance of the international economy was being threatened by the tigers of Asia and a re-invigorated Europe. Now that we have regained our economic hegemony, the foolishness of the argument that schooling effectiveness determines economic growth and capacity, rather than the reverse, has become apparent even to conservatives. Obviously, the school system that was demonized for our economic down-spiral has not been lauded for restoring us to economic supremacy.

But why, in 1983 and across the following decade, was it so easy to believe that poor public schooling was ruining our economy? Why is it still so easy to believe the fallacious myth of a golden education past, in which we successfully educated all students, including huge numbers of working-class, immigrant, African-American, and Latino children? Marketplace efforts to improve American public education have not done well in the past, and the evidence for any clear effects of vouchers in current experiments in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Florida is quite spotty. Nevertheless the conservative assault on public education continues unabated, innocent of evidence that we have ever effectively educated the children of the urban poor.

Take New York City

Looking at the collapse of the political will to support New York's public education across the past fifty years would be an interesting challenge and, I would guess, a mirror for the national trend. One could begin by comparing the expenditure on school facilities between 1900-1950, in constant dollars, to the same expenditure between 1950-2000. I would be surprised if the ratio difference were less than five to one in favor of the earlier period. This is the one area in which the perception of the deterioration of public education is accurate, for we have not provided the resources necessary to educate New York City's public schoolchildren for most of the past half century, and certainly not since the fiscal crisis of the mid-seventies. It is no coincidence that poor children of color have replaced the children of the middle class in New York City's schools in the same period. As our public school students became less white and less advantaged, the political will to support their education has evaporated. Currently, fewer than 15 percent of New York City's public schoolchildren are white, and almost 30 percent of the city's age-eligible school population attend non-public schools.

The abandonment of New York City schools by much of the middle class is, in part, a concomitant of the movement to the suburbs that began as white flight in the 1950s and has continued as a middle-class exodus ever since. But another part of the abandonment of the city's public schools involves rising expectations for children's futures. Parental hopes and expectations, especially those of parents of color, have far transcended the city school system's capacity to educate their children for successful futures.

American public education has never provided more than an eighth grade level of skills to most students in most urban systems. For the better part of the last century, we accepted

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such outcomes as both inevitable and fair. Until the past few decades, we have sustained, without apparent ideological or moral difficulty, a schooling system supposedly based on meritocratic principles that tracked students quite rigorously by race and class, sent far less than half to college, and consigned the rest to predictable locations in the labor force. But the transformation of our economy from a manufacturing base to a knowledge base—and the consequent demand for higher skills—makes it no longer possible, as it was in the 1950s, to drop out of school with an eighth grade education, land a job in industry, and advance to a reliable position with decent pay and lifetime benefits. Whether or not the health of our economy requires a continuously expanding supply of highly skilled labor, it's clear that the economic future for dropouts or even high school graduates is bleak. Therefore our public education system must do what it has never before attempted—end all tracking and educate all students to a universally high standard of academic achievement. Any lower level of expectation will doom too many students to such limited intellectual development that their life chances will be severely diminished.

We have never set a goal of universally high standards for all our public school students, and our city school systems are neither organized nor funded to achieve it. Academic performance in urban areas is so far from achieving universally high outcomes that the goal seems impossibly utopian—and often cruelly cynical—to many urban educators. This gap between what we need our city schools to do and what they are organized and funded to do is what produces the overwhelming perception of public school failure that conservatives manipulate to advance market mechanisms as solutions.

Consider the following New York City data. In Table I, colleagues at the New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy divided the city's thirty-two community school districts into five groups based on the extent of student need, as measured by the Board of Education's student need index. The lower need districts serve the city's more advantaged students, while the higher need districts serve the city's more disadvantaged students. Note how consistently the direction of each variable mirrors student need. The high-need districts have the schools, and students, with the low-

TABLE I
New York City Community School Districts Student Performance and Teacher Characteristics by Student Need 1997-98

Need	Lowest	Low-Mid	Mid	Mid-High	Highest
Community School Districts	2, 22, 25, 26, 29, 31	3, 11, 18, 20, 21, 27, 28	8, 13, 15, 17, 24, 30	1, 4, 5, 14, 16, 19, 23	6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 32
Percent of Students Passing the CTB*	63	53	47	40	38
Average Teacher Salary	$45,757	$43,986	$43,245	$41,705	$41,349
Percent of Teachers, Fully Licensed and Permanently Assigned	94.2	90.1	85.9	80.3	73.3
Percent of Teachers with More Than 5 Years Teaching Experience	67.7	63.5	61.2	60.5	58.4
Certification Exam Failure Rates**	8.1	17.2	22.5	25.1	30.0

*Standardized reading and math tests
**School-level data from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity trial material

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est academic performance. They have lower proportions of teachers who are licensed and experienced. Their teachers fail their certification exams at higher rates and receive lower average salaries than the teachers in the lower need districts.

These data define a stark pattern of teacher resource maldistribution; the schools and students that need high-quality teachers the most are least likely to receive them.

Recent research suggests that the linkages between teacher quality and high-outcome student learning are quite direct. Ronald Ferguson's research on student outcomes in Texas indicates that students of more qualified teachers produce higher test scores. We are not likely to improve our city's poorly performing schools until we change the distribution of quality teaching resources so that the poorest schools get, and keep, a substantial cohort of high-quality teachers.

One way to encourage the redistribution of experienced teachers to low-performing schools would be a teacher career ladder, buttressed by a differentiated pay scale based on demonstrated competencies. Reaching the top tier—a master teacher category—would be dependent on spending five years or more in a designated poorly performing school. Assume that to begin such a scheme, we need to recruit and assign a core team of six master teachers to each of the system's poorly performing schools. (Assigning six master teachers would allow us to place one master teacher at each grade level in most elementary schools and two in each middle school grade.) Assume that some three hundred of the city's most poorly performing schools—two hundred elementary and one hundred middle schools—desperately need such a core team of master teachers.

At a cost of approximately $60 million in a $12 billion annual school budget, this seems a doable task. Providing six master teachers—trained to work as an improvement team—would undoubtedly improve student performance in those schools. They could provide the core instructional leadership, mentoring and coaching, and professional development that the other, less experienced teachers desperately need.

This redistribution of teacher resources could be accomplished solely by implementing salary increment incentives. Moreover, boosting such teachers' annual pay with significant incentive bonuses would also increase the annual salary base on which their pensions are calculated. Reallocating high-quality teachers could be accomplished even more effectively if a mandate to serve in a failing school was one of the requirements of the final rung of a teacher career ladder.

The Wrong Way

The struggles of New York City's poorly performing schools to improve the skills of their inexperienced teachers demonstrate the failure to provide sufficient *opportunity to learn* for the city's public school students. Yet we are moving, however painfully, toward a more draconian form of accountability, without the necessary leaven of any reciprocity such as improving opportunity to learn. The New York State Regents' increasing reliance on performance outcomes has forced principals, district superintendents, and chancellors to sanction students and poorly performing schools. Students are held back in grade or denied graduation; schools are identified as failures, forced to adopt a planning regimen, and may be closed if their failure persists. New York State's improvement regimen assumes that effective planning will help these poorly performing schools improve. But most poor schools have no capacity to plan themselves out of failure. The critical problem is not how best to sanction failing schools; punishing schools for failure does not necessarily help them improve. The critical question is how best to improve the appallingly low levels of capacity, particularly teacher capacity, that plague most failing schools, by increasing the resources necessary to provide adequate opportunities to learn.

One answer is through legal challenge. The first stage of the lawsuit by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity against the State of New York, a suit arguing the state's obligation to provide increased opportunity to learn for the city's public schoolchildren, has been concluded. State Supreme Court Justice Leland DeGrasse has ruled that current state funding violates the constitutional requirement to provide a sound basic education to New York City's schoolchil-

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dren. Since New York State's governor has decided to appeal, we have an interim of perhaps two years before the state's highest court issues the definitive ruling about whether, and to what extent, the state's methods of providing resources to New York City schools must change. Perhaps the unparalleled strength of the city's civic culture, as well as its nationally pre-eminent corporate sector, can be persuaded to enlist in the inevitable legislative battles that will result from a judicial verdict ordering the state to adequately fund the city's schools.

ANOTHER POSSIBILITY is mobilizing those constituencies who still have a stake in good public schools. In New York City, for example, the city's 1.1 million public school students represent at least 500,000 families; how many of those families might be mobilized to fight for a better education for their children? (Voucher advocates undoubtedly ask themselves a similar question.) Colleagues in our Institute's Community Involvement Program work with some two dozen community-based organizations to launch school improvement efforts in their neighborhoods. Though most efforts are still in the initial stages, each group has had little difficulty organizing a core of neighborhood parents for sustained and vigorous school improvement campaigns.

In most of the city's boroughs, groups organized by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), as well as groups organized by the Industrial Areas Foundation, have been mobilizing public school parents to demand school, district, and system-wide improvement. A coalition involving ACORN, Citizen Action, many of the city and the state's education advocacy and community-based groups, and a range of public-sector unions including the United Federation of Teachers and the New York State United Teachers has created the Alliance for Quality Education, a statewide campaign to increase state investment in class size reduction, teacher quality, school facilities, and early childhood education.

More than a thousand nonprofit organizations provide multiple forms of assistance and support to New York City schools. Many members of the city's unions, in both public and private sectors, have children in the city schools. If public school parents, members of nonprofit service providers and community organizations, education advocacy and school reform groups, and the city's unions could mobilize around an agenda of genuine school improvement, sufficient public will might emerge to provide the resources our schools need.

It is not hard to demonstrate that continuing to neglect our city schools will impose severe consequences in wages forgone, in safety net costs, and in continually escalating prison expenditures across the ensuing decades. The critical question is how to articulate those consequences and mobilize the public will necessary to improve our public schools. Those of us who believe that public schools are crucially linked to democratic politics and who are committed to make public schools effective for all children must constantly fight a dual battle—against the abandonment of public education to marketplace solutions and for the radical changes necessary to make public schools serve all students well. If our schools were never as good as many of us mistakenly believe, they must still be made far better than they are now. ●

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A GI Bill For Everybody

Adolph Reed, Jr.

WHAT IF EDUCATION were available without tuition charges to every resident meeting admissions criteria, as a right, at any public, post-secondary educational institution in the United States? Is this idea feasible? Is there potential public support for it? What would be its likely effects if implemented? What would such a commitment cost? How could those costs be met? These questions are not on the radar screen of American public discourse today. In fact, they are virtually unthinkable in the current consensus that sets the boundaries of acceptable policy debate.

Yet paying for higher education is a major concern for most Americans. In 2000, polls indicated that respondents included education, along with the economy, as one of the two highest priority issues in choosing a presidential candidate. Although much of this expressed concern is centered on the quality of pre-collegiate schooling, Americans are also worried about access to post-secondary education. Legitimately so, for post-secondary education is increasingly a prerequisite for effective labor force participation, for any hope of a relatively secure, decent job. If that is the case, shouldn't society have an obligation to provide universal access to such an essential social good? Why should we accept a putative consensus that preempts consideration of an issue so important to so many Americans?

Universal access to higher education is not entirely unprecedented in recent American history. The most dramatic approximation to it was the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, popularly known as the GI Bill, under which a generation of Second World War veterans received what was usually full tuition support and stipends (up to nearly $12,000 per year in 1994 dollars) to attend post-secondary educational institutions. By 1952, the federal government had spent $7 billion (nearly $39 billion in 1994 dollars) on sending veterans to college. This amounted to 1.3 percent of total federal expenditures ($521.8 billion) during that period. A 1988 report by a congressional subcommittee on education and health estimated that 40 percent of those who attended college under the GI Bill would not otherwise have done so. The report also found that each dollar spent educating that 40 percent produced a $6.90 return (more than $267 billion in 1994 dollars) in national output due to extra education and increased federal tax revenues from the extra income the beneficiaries earned.

The dynamics set in motion by the GI Bill had broad, positive ramifications for the country as a whole, extending far beyond the direct beneficiaries. Not only did the latter benefit from increased income, occupational and employment opportunities, and personal growth and enrichment; these benefits extended intergenerationally, making for greater opportunities for their children and families, which contributed to a general expansion in college enrollments through the 1970s, far outstripping population growth. Enrollments increased by nearly 21 percent between 1950-1960 and nearly 167 percent between 1960-1970. In 1950, for example, 1.7 percent of the total U.S. population were enrolled in colleges and universities; by 1975, the figure had risen steadily to 5.2 percent. This growth also fueled a dramatic expansion of colleges and universities. Bulging enrollments led to substantial enlargement of physical plant and capacities at existing institutions. Increased demand for higher education also prompted creation of new institutions, many of them public campuses in urban and under-served rural areas that brought higher education physically within

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reach of new segments of society. The Bureau of the Census counted 1,708 institutions of higher education in 1940 and 1,959 in 1960; by 1981, the number had risen to more than 3,200. All this expansion in turn stimulated construction and other employment opportunities, ranging from faculties and staff to support services and the commercial sector. It also dramatically democratized college and university life and broadened and deepened the intellectual life of campuses and academic disciplines. Michael J. Bennett writes movingly of the GI Bill's democratizing cultural and intellectual effects in *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America*.

Of course, factors other than public tuition support contributed significantly to the postwar explosion in higher education. Among them were the general economic prosperity of the period; the rising wages, benefits, and job security available to many unionized workers as part of the Fordist capital/labor accord that prevailed at least in the industrial sector through the 1960s; and the perceived need to invest in education sparked by the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1957. After 1965, the Vietnam War no doubt also contributed to increased college attendance, insofar as student deferments from conscription made enrollment more attractive to draft-age males.

And the expansion, particularly in cities, was often a mixed blessing. To the extent that new construction for higher education was linked to urban renewal schemes, it frequently came with the unacknowledged cost of destroying inner-city neighborhoods. Any overall cost-benefit analysis would have to account for the social losses of such dislocation, which included seriously disrupting the lives of people already precariously situated financially, severing ties to place and social networks, intensifying pressures on affordable housing, and exacerbating racial inequalities. (As Martin Anderson noted in *The Federal Bulldozer*, more than two-thirds of those displaced nationally for urban renewal site clearance and construction through the early 1960s were black or Puerto Rican.) Nevertheless, expanded access to higher education almost certainly has had substantially democratizing effects in the general population and in the long-term, even among the racial groups whose stigmatized status and segregated living arrangements made many of them particularly vulnerable to victimization by the redevelopment juggernaut.

The history of the City University of New York provides a local, but instructive illustration of the general social benefits that result from removing financial constraint from access to higher education. The free tuition policy in effect in the CUNY system until the 1970s also brought higher education within reach for tens of thousands of people for whom it would otherwise have been no more than an unrealizable dream. In addition to the impressively lengthy roster of prominent public officials, academics, and others who took advantage of that access, exponentially more people were able to translate it into more secure and rewarding jobs than would otherwise have been attainable.

Similarly, many states responded to increased demand for higher education by expanding and rationalizing public systems to facilitate access, often by enlarging and integrating community college, regional, and state university tiers in ways that enabled students to move fluidly from one level to another as their accomplishment and interests warranted. For decades, the California system was a model of this kind of egalitarian access and fluidity. The aftermath of Proposition 13 (the 1978 California ballot initiative that radically cut property taxes and imposed draconian restrictions on subsequent increases) and the constrained revenue base resulting from tax revolt politics has reduced this mobility within the California system since the early 1980s. However, graduate admission records underscore its persistence: applicants from California still commonly display transcripts that mark the journey from community to state college and then to the university system.

BEGINNING IN the 1970s and accelerating during the 1980s, costs of attending colleges and universities rose nationally, and sources of federal grant-in-aid support decreased relative to need. Aggregate tuition and fees at all kinds of institutions of higher education (private and public) rose from slightly more than $5 billion in 1970 to more than $55 billion in 1996. When adjusted for inflation,

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this amounts to a 170 percent increase, which was nearly two and a half times greater than the rate of growth in aggregate enrollments over that period (while real wages remained flat, or even declined, during that time). Meanwhile, in 1970 federal grants covered only 2.7 percent of total tuition and fees, but that was at a point when such costs, especially for in-state students at public institutions, were generally low and more easily manageable. By 1980, increasing concerns about rising costs had prompted increased government aid—covering more than 23 percent of tuition and fees nationally, though this increase hardly kept pace with increased costs. By 1996, such grants had declined and covered less than 12 percent of total tuition and fees. This retrenchment was partly the result of intentional rightist strategies to rein in what was perceived as a source of "adversarial culture" in universities and an expression of the corporate-led attack on social wage benefits of all sorts that might weaken labor discipline.

Increasingly, college attendance for all except the wealthy has become contingent on qualification for interest-carrying student loans. This filters out many potential students who either cannot afford the encumbrance of loan indebtedness or cannot qualify for loans. More students are prevented from completing degree programs because they exhaust the sums for which they qualify before satisfying the requirements. Still more take much longer to complete their courses of study than they otherwise would because they have to take off time to work. Still more are pressured by their debt burdens to pursue courses of study, or even subsequent lines of employment, outside their interests in hopes of earning enough to pay off their loans.

This state of affairs is inimical to a decent and just society. It imposes unacceptable, though typically unacknowledged, human costs in terms of social waste and unfulfilled potential, and it perverts the values of higher education. Moreover, it is unnecessary. A 1999 report from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics indicates that in 1996 tuition and fee revenues at all two-year and four-year degree-awarding public educational institutions totaled just over $23 billion. This is a relatively small sum, equivalent to roughly 2 percent of current federal budgets. Even if increased access were to double the number of students attending colleges and universities and double the annual tuition demand to $46 billion, that would still be a sum easily absorbed within current budgets. Even potential increases in other forms of federal aid to students, such as Pell Grants for non-tuition expenses, would not prohibitively increase the total cost. The expenditure commitments could be absorbed easily by restoring minimal tax justice; for instance, simply closing corporate tax shelter loopholes introduced since 1990 would generate an estimated $60 billion annually.

One of the most regrettable and self-defeating developments within progressive policy circles during the last two decades has been an atrophy of practical, programmatic vision. This is especially true with respect to those policy areas that lie in the domain of social wage provision—for example, health care, education, affordable housing, income support, old-age security, civil rights, and labor rights. This has been one of Reaganism's subtler, but more far-reaching victories. By seizing the political initiative and setting the terms of public debate, the right has so demoralized us and put us so completely on the defensive politically that we often seem capable of struggling only to minimize losses or, at best, to press for minimally incremental, often concessionary reforms. The result is that we have been unable effectively to counter the right wing's fundamental proposition that government has little or no responsibility for securing the general welfare and providing access to opportunities for the enhancement of the lives of the general population.We seem to have lost the ability or the will to articulate policies for making the society as just and democratic as it should be; instead, we have become increasingly focused on trying to secure what we think might actually be attainable within a policy universe dominated by the right's denial of the efficacy of public action.

This failure of progressive policy vision is understandable. Activist and advocacy groups that have faced the brunt of the endlessly es-

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calating right-wing assault are necessarily forced into a defensive mode as their often already precariously situated constituencies have been its prime targets. However, the only way to turn the tide of the right's war against the social gains won in the middle half of the twentieth century is to present clearly—and generate public discussion around—an affirmative policy agenda that addresses people's most basic concerns and is a practical expression of a different view of public responsibility and governmental capacity. We need to shift the terms of public debate, to break the stranglehold of Margaret Thatcher's right-wing mantra that the late Daniel Singer summed up pithily as TINA—There Is No Alternative—to the unrestrained action of market forces. This task does not contradict or override the more immediate struggles to preserve past gains that have been under concerted attack, such as commitments to racial and gender justice, social security for the elderly, and governmental provision of quality public services. Indeed, it is a necessary complement to them. The only way to preserve those gains is to challenge the arguments used in attacking them.

We need a clear voice that seeks to shift the terms of public debate by reasserting the principles of social solidarity and public responsibility that have become increasingly marginalized during the past two decades. This means focusing on objectives that speak to people's immediate, everyday concerns—even if these lie beyond today's political horizon and cannot reasonably be expected to bear fruit within less than several election cycles. Objectives such as universal health care and universal access to higher education are practically realizable if political will can be generated to implement them. How can we generate that will? We have to open a broad policy discussion that begins with the question, What would American public policy look like and how would our institutions operate if their first priority were to meet the most important concerns of the vast majority of the population?

This majority is not currently included among those that define the parameters of policy debate; they have not participated in calculating the supposed limits of feasibility and practicality that narrow the political horizon. Yet, as Michael Zweig has argued persuasively in *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, they are the American *demos*, the democratic base. The left's most vital task, therefore, is to encourage a truly popular discussion about national priorities and the means to fulfill them. Not only do poll data indicate that education is already a broadly shared concern; in our own lives and in our interactions with others, we all recognize the strain that paying for higher education imposes throughout the population. So it makes sense to argue that significant potential exists for building grassroots support for realistic strategies that would make access to higher education available to all Americans, so far as interest and ability can take them.

In the comparably critical area of health care, the Maine legislature's passage of a single-payer bill, signed into law by the governor, is the most dramatic recent indication of openness within the public to policy strategies that break sharply with neoliberal orthodoxy. In last year's elections, single-payer ballot initiatives won by at least 60 percent majorities in non-binding referenda in six legislative districts across Massachusetts and in Alachua County, Florida (where the initiative received more votes than any presidential candidate). These are admittedly modest victories, but they at least reinforce a suspicion that popular sentiment can be cultivated in support of policies that address broadly shared needs in just and egalitarian ways, without subordinating them to market theology. The key ingredient missing from left politics at this juncture in the United States is a concerted strategy for building popular constituencies to pursue objectives that resonate with people's concerns and harnessing those objectives to a social vision that lies outside the limits defined by current elite consensus.

That is in large measure how the right was able to change the terms of political debate in the first place, though the vision around which it articulates those concerns is largely a scam. After Barry Goldwater was swamped by Lyndon Johnson in 1964, militants of the right embarked on a strategic, long-term campaign that was largely

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grassroots-based. They realized that their push had been premature; the Johnson landslide showed them that it was necessary to take a step back and try to create a popular constituency for their political agenda. They pursued this objective by doing several things that we have consistently failed to do since the high period of civil rights and antiwar activism in the 1960s. They mobilized activists at the local level around issue-based campaigns that challenged the prevailing axes of incrementalist policy debate—for instance, for school prayer and tax cuts, against abortion, affirmative action, the Equal Rights Amendment, and school busing. They identified and cultivated bases of support around each of these issues and worked to knit them together into a coherent movement.

This is the stuff of social-movement building. For too long now progressives have operated as if we already have the mobilized constituencies that we need. The governing consensus in national politics indicates that we don't. This is one of the strategic limitations of the domestic mobilization to challenge the World Trade Organization and other neoliberal globalization initiatives. While a focus on mounting highly visible international protests is understandable and perhaps necessary, by themselves those actions do little to deepen popular awareness of the dynamics and dangers that activists wish to combat. To that extent, these mobilizations may be self-limiting in scope and effectiveness.

Their continued success requires planting roots within the broader population. Most Americans, however, have at most inchoate and incoherent views of the stakes of economic globalization; the interpretation of this process for popular discourse remains—at least outside the ranks of already committed progressives and attentive union members—the province of corporate media and its sound-bite analyses. It is past time for us to learn the same lesson that the right learned after Goldwater's defeat.

A COMMON OBJECTION to this comparison is that the right succeeded because it plays to people's fears, which are supposedly easier to mobilize around than more abstract, less emotionally charged political programs. But the concrete fears that most people experience most acutely connect much more immediately with the programs of the left: for example, fear of job loss and declining living standards, lack of access to adequate health care, affordable housing, and quality education. Another objection, largely a smear by smug neoliberals, is that the left proposes no new ideas and offers only opposition without clear, practical alternatives. But the right galvanizes its ranks largely around opposition to abortion, taxation, civil rights, immigration, and social spending. And what ideas are more shopworn in American politics than racism, nativism, and unrestrained property rights? Indeed, the right persists in presenting itself as an opposition movement even as it consolidates its dominance of the political landscape under the mantra of bipartisanship.

It is only by taking up the challenge of building a coherent movement, creating and cultivating popular support for a long-term struggle focused on everyday needs—what are sometimes described as "practical utopias"—that it will be possible to redefine the terms of national policy debate. Removal of financial constraint on access to higher education could be such an initiative. It could appeal immediately to students, parents, university faculty and staff, and the organizations that represent them. It also has a natural and historic base in the labor movement, and not only among unions that represent workers in the education sector. Free public education was one of the two main demands of the earliest American unions, along with the shorter work week.

Despite the right's attempts to characterize public support for higher education as an upper-middle-class giveaway, this is an issue that has resonance throughout the population. The "Joe Sixpack" imagery that drives so much disingenuous right-wing populism is simply bogus. Interest in educating oneself and one's children—for both instrumental reasons related to employment and noninstrumental reasons related to intellectual curiosity and self-fulfillment—is not by any means the exclusive property of the upper middle class. It is a condescending caricature that other working people do not have similar aspirations. Indeed, an element of this issue's appeal is its

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broad resonance within the population; it has the potential to cut across the familiar lines of division by race, gender, age, inner city, and suburb that the right has successfully exploited and intensified over the past two decades.

The Debs-Jones-Douglass Institute, a nonprofit educational organization associated with the Labor Party, will put out a call this fall for a grassroots campaign to make higher education universally accessible to all academically qualifying potential students. (Accessibility also should require adequate remedial and developmental support for borderline admits and easy movement from community college through university on the basis of interest and demonstrated ability.)

This could be the beginning of a significant popular movement—on the order of earlier agitation for black Americans' civil rights, for the eight-hour day, or for old-age assistance—that helps to redefine the terms of national political debate. As those earlier movements did, it could also achieve its own objectives and, in the process, expand the foundation of American democracy. ●

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Living Wage 101

Rachel Neumann

RECENTLY, after nine years of resolutely ignoring pleas, letters, e-mails, and the occasional phone call, I went to my first ever college alumni event. The reason was not a sudden burst of pride or the creeping nostalgia of age—rather it was seeing the Swarthmore living wage campaign in the news. Along with students at twenty other college campuses, Swatties spent a good part of last year causing a ruckus, marching up and down the beautifully manicured lawns, demanding meetings with the president, and publishing heartfelt manifestos. Although there was no Harvard-style sit-in, the movement was an important shift for the predominantly liberal but sleepy student body and an example of the way living wage campaigns have become a key economic justice issue both in cities and on college campuses.

Swarthmore likes to boast that it has one of the highest rates of racial and ethnic diversity of any college of its size and academic standing, not a small feat considering its location in a tiny, predominantly white and Lutheran hamlet outside of Philadelphia. According to President Al Bloom, approximately 24 percent of the student body are people of color—including international students. Yet the cleaning, dining, and maintenance staff—which is predominantly African-American—makes wages below the average necessary to feed and take care of a family, even after many years. "Essie Mae was here for thirty-nine years, and when she left she made $10.50 an hour," Michelle Hartel, a dining room employee, told the local paper. Women's Association for Women's Alternatives, a national organization that helps campaigns develop living wage standards, calculated that to take care of rent, food, and basic necessities, a Swarthmore employee would need to make around $13.00 an hour. In 2000, minimum hiring wages ranged from $5.36 per hour to $8.53 per hour. The Swarthmore Living Wage Democracy Campaign sees the final minimum living wage as negotiable, but the basic premise of the campaign isn't: *People working full time should be able to support themselves and their families on their salary, and the administration has the moral responsibility to ensure all workers earn a livable wage.*

The Swarthmore campaign came out of the Conscious Consumers student group, which focused on international issues—divestment and worldwide working conditions—until last fall when Kae Kalwick, an administrative assistant, came to speak to them about staff wages. Students began meeting one-on-one with staff to listen to their concerns: not only the need for a more livable wage, but also the lack of respect from both students and administrators and the lack of decision-making power (there is no union at Swarthmore, and a failed attempt at unionization eight years ago has not been repeated). "We decided to focus on wages because that was the most concrete thing," says Sam Blair, a senior involved in the group.

In the first year of the campaign, Conscious Consumers gathered more than a thousand supporting signatures and met with the administration. Initially, the group was accused by some administrators and students of being too "confrontational" for Swarthmore's Quaker style. "After the Harvard sit-in," Blair says, "that changed. People started to understand what we were doing and why." Still, the group has met with resistance from the administration. "It would be great," President Al Bloom said in an interview, "if we lived in a world where people were paid justly. . .for the work they did and if the government provided the funds to make that possible. But as it is, we have to balance

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paying for the education of our students with paying for our staff."

At the alumni event, Bloom argued that increasing staff wages would mean a cutback in educational services for students, including, possible cuts in "scholarships for low-income students." As was the case during the South Africa divestment protests at Swarthmore in the late eighties, the administration seems to be saying that the disadvantaged have to pay (there is no talk, not surprisingly, of cutting back on an extra computer class or new building). The campaign argues that, given Swarthmore's billion dollar endowment, it can't morally afford *not* to pay the staff a living wage. For Kalwick, the living wage campaign is as crucial to students' education as the classes they take. "One way Swarthmore could show itself as a true leader in social justice [would be] to model those principles in the way it treats all people on campus," she said. "There is a lot of talk in Swarthmore classes about social justice. You can't talk about race, gender, or any of these issues and not see what's happening right under your nose. The living wage campaign is about bridging theory and practice."

What Is a Living Wage?

The campaign's premise, whether at the city, county, or campus level, is that federal and state minimum wages do not allow full-time workers to adequately support themselves or their families. The federal minimum wage was recently raised to an extravagant $5.15 an hour. That's a whopping $10,712 a year before taxes, which doesn't put you above the poverty line in most urban areas. Living wage campaigns seek to pass campus or local ordinances requiring the institution or city to pay workers enough to live. City campaigns affect city employees and any company above a certain size that does business with the city. Campus campaigns are most relevant for dining hall, maintenance, and grounds staff. The exact wage amount can be calculated in a number of ways. Many campaigns define the living wage as equivalent to the poverty line for a family of four (currently $8.20 per hour)—although, depending on the city, campaign demands have ranged from $6.25 per hour (New Orleans) to $12.37 per hour (Providence). With welfare-to-work "reform" touted as the way to get people off the rolls, the living wage campaigns are the logical moral conclusion—if you are going to require people to work to support themselves, then their jobs should pay enough to support them.

Since Harvard's highly publicized and successful living wage campaign ended on May 8 after a twenty-one-day sit-in (the longest in the university's history), living wage campaigns have gotten a boost of energy and media attention. "Winning a campaign [like Harvard's] definitely helps," says Jenn Kern, director of the Living Wage Resource Center run by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) "but we'd be here anyway. A living wage campaign gives people something very local and finite they can fight for." Baltimore passed what is considered the first modern living wage ordinance in 1994, and since then campaigns have sprouted up in cities, counties, and on both urban and rural campuses. There are now sixty-seven living wage ordinances on the books and seventy-five active campaigns (including twenty-three on college campuses). These ordinances aren't just in the traditionally liberal towns either; solidly Republican Suffolk County, New York, and Kankakee County, Illinois, have passed ordinances. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Bozeman, Montana, both have active campaigns.

The list of universities currently engaged in living wage battles reads like a high school student's wish list. In addition to Harvard and Swarthmore, campaigns have been won or are being fought at Princeton, Wesleyan, University of Virginia, Johns Hopkins, Brown, Stanford, American University, Earlham College, American University/George Washington School of Law, Fairfield University, and the University of Tennessee. At each of these colleges, it helps that well-heeled parents and alumni are joining the fight—blast-faxing the administration, picketing the Harvard Club in Boston, and generally being pains-in-the-ass until the administration takes note. There's nothing like having your offspring holed up in Massachusetts Hall to turn parents into activists.

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Yet the majority of the organizing is being done by students, many of whom were active in Union Summer (an AFL-CIO organizing project for college students) and the antisweatshop movement. Although the antisweatshop movement is still strong, according to Kern, many students thought that there wasn't much more they could do at the local level. "It got to the point where people were arguing over international monitoring bodies and it was becoming a very distant fight." One of the crucial lessons of the antisweatshop movement was the connection between what happened at the personal level and in the greater college community and its effect on workers around the world. In large part because of student pressure, seventy-eight colleges have joined the Worker Rights Consortium, the strictest of the independent groups that monitor workers' conditions in textile factories. Students at more than twenty-five colleges participated in a dining hall boycott of Sodexho Marriot—a food service company that also invests heavily in private prisons, which often serve as some of the lowest wage domestic sweatshops. Living wage campaigns take some of the best lessons from the antisweatshop movement—including the need to work with unions and community groups—and apply it at the most local level.

THE LIVING WAGE campaigns have not only brought union and community groups onto campus, but have infused local labor and activist groups with new energy. At Harvard and Johns Hopkins, strong Service Employees International and Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employee unions already existed. At Brown, where only some of the workers are organized, union organizing has been part of the student campaign. At Swarthmore, where there is no union, students are often doing the work union organizers would do, and networking with them for help and advice. The unions learn, too, often hiring student organizers to help with future campaigns.

Students are also taking lessons from the large-scale demonstrations against the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Economic Forum, Free Trade Area of the Americas, and G8. They are creating broad-based coalitions with staff, faculty, unions, and almost anyone else who will support the cause ("Micro-Physicists for A Living Wage" read one sign at Harvard), and they are using all the technology and media connections at their disposal. At Harvard, one of the facilitators of the large-scale protests in Seattle and Los Angeles during the Democratic National Convention was flown east to help with last-minute negotiations. According to Kern, "these campaigns have got to be public if they are going to survive. They have to stay out of task forces and committees and stay on the streets." That's one thing the global justice movement has helped remind students: if you don't reach out to the community and make sure to involve workers and keep them engaged, it will fall apart.

Workerless Wage Campaigns?

Yet engaging workers is one of the areas where some campaigns have run into difficulty, in part because a living wage—on its own—doesn't address the issues of respect or decision-making that the Swarthmore staff cited as being as important to them as wage increases. Also unaddressed by most campaigns are non-wage issues such as advancement, child care, medical and disability benefits, and quality of work. Unless they expand to take on these issues, living wage campaigns run the risk of becoming short-lived policy campaigns, without any guarantee that their victories can be sustained.

Living wage campaigns can make a huge material difference to the workers they affect, often raising wages by a few dollars per hour. However, they affect a relatively small number of workers for the energy that's put into them (two hundred workers, at most, at Swarthmore; sometimes fifteen hundred in big city campaigns). And so they are as much about establishing a model as they are about the campaign itself, which is why linking wages to worker respect and self-determination is so important. To their credit, many of the students are well aware of this and speak of organizing *with* the workers instead of *for* them. At Brown, one successful strategy was a campaign called "I Work At Brown," in which students conducted interviews with staff about what their

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lives and jobs were like and their struggle to survive and then blasted them from boom boxes around campus, sometimes with accompanying hip-hop beats.

PROBABLY THE worst thing that could happen to the living wage campaigns is that they fight solely for a wage increase—which could be reversed at any time—and nothing more, so that even a victory would leave decision making in the hands of the administration. Jess Walsh, in an article in *New Labor Forum*, raises the specter of workerless living wage campaigns on campuses:

> If campus living wage campaigns are to have material effects for workers in the form of wages and benefits and an ongoing voice on the job, then coalitions must foster worker participation and create worker representation vehicles within universities....The challenge is to adapt new institutional arrangements for worker representation that can work without union organizing and collective bargaining, but that do not work to the detriment of organizing, and can in fact promote and support unionization.... Living wage campaigns, at their best, are part of a movement for worker democracy and decision making.

Thinking about Swarthmore, Kae Kalwick echoes Walsh: "The ideal, for me, would be . . .that workers run their workplace and make the decisions that relate to their workplace."

Living wage campaigns have already won a huge public relations battle just with their name—it's clearly a movement *for* something and for something concrete, and it's hard to say you are against a livable wage. It's a lesson that the larger anticorporate globalization movement is struggling to learn. *Globalophobicos* (the Spanish word for the protesters) has the wrong ring to it—people afraid of the world. The difficulty in creating change at the large financial institutions and the greater police violence at recent demonstrations have encouraged some activists to return to local campaigns. Yet clearly the movement needs both—the detailed, very local work and the reminder that the different movements are interconnected and have common goals. "Whether here at home or in sweatshops abroad, working people are disempowered and that's what we're fighting against," Blair says. "We can't act with integrity without doing the work at the local level that we are trying to do at the international one." •

RACHEL NEUMANN is an assistant editor of *Dissent*.

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Graduate Student Unions Fight the Corporate University

Gordon Lafer

THIS SPRING, graduate students at New York University made history when they won recognition for the first graduate student union at a private university. To accomplish this feat, students had to overcome the political and legal opposition of virtually every elite school in the country. In a series of hearings before the National Labor Relations Board, arguments opposing the union were voiced not only by NYU's own administration but by those of Yale, Princeton, Columbia University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford, Johns Hopkins, Boston University, the American Association of Universities, the American Council on Education, and the Council on Graduate Schools. In a series of landmark rulings, the Labor Board rejected the arguments of these scions of higher education and opened the door to a new wave of organizing on the nation's campuses.

The fact that the entire organizational leadership of elite higher education mobilized against the NYU union indicates what was at stake in this fight. In fact, though, the NYU decision was only one of several recent decisions that have marked a sea change in academic labor relations. In the past two years, officials in California, Illinois, and Pennsylvania have issued rulings similar to that in the NYU case, invalidating the claims made by administrators for the past two decades. These rulings have helped to spur an unprecedented boom in graduate student organizing. Within three months of the NYU union's winning recognition, unions were voted in by lopsided margins at both Temple University and Michigan State University, a majority of graduate students at Columbia and Brown petitioned the NLRB for an election, and new organizing drives were announced at Penn State and the University of Pennsylvania. These activities come on the heels of what is already a fast-growing movement. Since 1995, the number of graduate student unions in the country has grown from ten to twenty-seven, and an estimated 20 percent of all graduate employees are now covered by union contracts—a level comparable to the most highly organized states in the country and 50 percent above the national norm.

The Economic Function of Graduate Students in the Corporate University

Although the legal decisions have been important, the recent boom in organizing activity is primarily a reaction to dynamics within the university itself. The traditional ideal of college education pictures a setting that is specifically outside the rat race—an opportunity to explore ideas, make friendships, and develop a sense of one's self in ways that are not possible amid the dog-eat-dog pressures of commercial life. However, for the past thirty years, universities have moved progressively away from this community-of-scholars model, fashioning themselves instead in the image of private corporations. Rather than pursuing the romantic vision of the classroom as an encounter between seasoned scholars and eager young minds, administrators across the country have radically shifted teaching duties away from regular faculty and onto the shoulders of graduate students and adjunct instructors. The economic logic of this strategy is simple to grasp: in 1999, an average full professor earned $71,000 per year, while graduate student teachers earned between $5,000 and $20,000. Not surprisingly, the number of tenure-track faculty was cut by 10 percent between 1975 and 1995—a period during which overall enrollment was expanding significantly—while the number of graduate teaching assistants in-

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creased by nearly 40 percent. Nationally, it is estimated that between 50 percent and 70 percent of all teaching hours are now performed by graduate students and other contingent teachers; an undergraduate signing up for an introductory English class has less than a one-in-four chance of being taught by a tenure-track professor. And in both natural science and humanities departments, graduate students are responsible for 90 percent of the grading. As administrators have been increasingly driven by bottom-line considerations, graduate students have become an indispensable ingredient in the financial calculations of every major university.

Moreover, graduate students appear likely to play an even more central role in what are emerging as the critical growth markets for American universities: corporate research in the natural sciences and distance learning in the humanities and social sciences. Across the country, administrators are competing to cement corporate partnerships supporting jointly funded science research. Beyond the immediate value of funding, universities have been accelerating efforts to capture the intellectual property rights that emerge from this research, with many schools pioneering in-house venture-capital offices to support for-profit startups based on the results of laboratory research. The potential earnings from pharmaceutical, technology, and biotech patents represent a major new profit center for university managers and have led many schools to market their science departments aggressively to potential private sector partners.

For the university, these joint ventures are valuable sources of revenue to complement or replace federal science funding, along with the lure of future profits on a scale never before contemplated. For pharmaceutical giants, they are a much cheaper alternative to in-house research. Outside the confines of the nation's campuses, it is impossible to get highly educated scientists to do rigorous work for sixty hours a week at $20,000 per year; this is the unbeatable deal that universities offer their corporate partners. This win-win solution, however, relies critically on the availability of thousands of graduate students who are simultaneously among the nation's most highly trained and most poorly paid technology workers.

In the humanities and social science departments, the key emerging market is distance learning. Administrators across the country are racing each other to establish online courses that will be sold to a variety of market niches: working adults who can afford tuition but are unable to attend on-campus classes, individuals in rural communities who are willing to pay for a more marketable degree than that provided by the local community college, and wealthy foreigners who may be eager to pay a premium for an American degree. Administrators have rushed headlong into this emerging market. In 1998, NYU itself made history when it became the first university in the country to establish a for-profit subsidiary devoted to capturing the distance-learning market. If graduate assistants are instrumental to the delivery of large lecture classes *on campus*, their importance will be multiplied when popular courses are marketed to tens of thousands of students around the globe. Although distance learning may suggest a fully automated education, it is unlikely that tuition-paying students will settle for it. As the market gets more competitive, wealthy consumers in Beijing or Bangalore will look for online chat-classrooms, e-mail "office hours," and detailed feedback on term papers.

Indeed, as universities look to identify market winners, most faculty are likely to be squeezed out of the virtual university. In the beginning stages, thousands of professors may be asked to convert their current courses into online offerings. Ultimately, however, the logic of distance learning means that universities will look to standardize their educational products by patenting the lectures and course materials of name faculty who will serve as "content providers"; thus, students in Hong Kong may sign up for the "Henry Kissinger Lectures in Post-War Diplomacy" or similar name-brand courses. Clearly, the big names will have little or no contact with students; their time is too expensive. The profit strategy of these new ventures, then, relies explicitly on an army of graduate students and adjuncts to monitor online discussions, critique papers, answer questions, and get to know individual students'

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work well enough to write the obligatory letters of recommendation. Similar applications are now being developed for science departments as well; thus MIT recently announced an ambitious effort, developed in collaboration with Microsoft Research, to create online science labs that would allow physics and engineering students to participate in laboratory instruction from remote portals. Here too, it is likely that graduate students will play a critical role in the creation of the for-profit market for online laboratory training.

BUT THE SAME dynamics that make graduate students such a good buy while they are in school make them increasingly unemployable after they complete their degrees, leading a coalition of national faculty associations to bemoan "the vanishing traditional faculty member." The wholesale substitution of casual teachers for tenure-track positions has marked the decimation of the academic job market. At Yale, it was estimated that the use of graduate teachers produced a savings of over $5 million per year and allowed administrators to eliminate nearly two hundred junior faculty positions at that school alone. Nationally, there are now 200,000 graduate teachers in the nation's universities, but only 114,000 junior faculty members; thus, even if every single assistant professor quit or got promoted, 40 percent of current graduate students would remain jobless. In the natural sciences, the turn to commercially sponsored research has likewise encouraged a more corporate structure in which a limited number of principal investigators oversee a large staff of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. As a result, the number of faculty positions has decreased while the time one is expected to apprentice in the purgatory between graduate school and a junior faculty slot has lengthened, with Ph.D.'s in the biological sciences now spending an average of four years in low-wage postdoctoral "fellowships." Even at the nation's top schools, the share of life sciences Ph.D.s who go on to permanent research jobs in either academia or industry has fallen from 87 percent in 1973 to 56 percent in 1995. The Commission on Life Sciences warns that "many graduate students entered life science training with the expectation that they would become like their mentors: they would be able to establish laboratories in which they would pursue research based on their own scientific ideas. The reality that now faces many of them seems very different."

Finally, even those ultimately lucky enough to land tenure-track positions find that they are still not inhabiting the lives of their mentors. While other professional salaries have soared over the past three decades, downsizing has enabled university administrators to cut faculty pay, despite significant growth in the higher education market. At the end of the century, average salaries for tenured faculty were approximately 5 percent lower than they were in 1970. This, then, is the contradiction that lies at the heart of the corporatization process: the very dynamics that make graduate students so useful to the business mission of the university are also destroying the academic careers that are supposed to justify the long haul of earning a Ph.D.

In the 1980 *National Labor Relations Board v. Yeshiva University* case that largely banned faculty unions at private universities, Justice William Brennan's dissent warned of the dangers of leaving academia a union-free environment. Removing the possibility of faculty organizing, he predicted, "threatens to eliminate much of the administration's incentive to resolve its disputes. . . through open discussion and mutual agreement . . . [and] removes whatever deterrent value [labor law] may offer against unreasonable administrative conduct." Twenty years later, it appears that graduate education has fallen victim, in part, to just this unchecked administrative power feared by Brennan. Given a free hand to unilaterally mold the university to their own liking, administrators have produced a system that—while financially successful—has undercut much of what used to stand at the heart of academic life.

Anti-unionism and "Academic Freedom"

For twenty years, administrators across the country have relied on a common set of arguments to oppose granting their graduate students the same rights afforded secretaries and librarians: that graduate teachers and researchers are "students, not employees," that the tasks they carry out are "training, not work," and that

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unionization would destroy the collegiality of campus relations. These arguments, carefully honed by anti-union lawyers, were all decisively rejected by the Labor Board. The single most counter-intuitive argument launched against unionization is the proposition that unions threaten academic freedom. NYU asserted that all the working conditions of teachers—including salary and workload—were "educational policy" issues that could not be subject to collective bargaining without undermining fundamental freedoms. The Labor Board roundly rebuffed this argument. The university already negotiates over terms of employment with individual graduate students, the board noted, as individuals are free to reject teaching positions if they deem the salary inadequate. Thus, NYU's real concern was to avoid negotiating terms of employment *collectively* rather than individually, presumably based on the fear that collective bargaining would prove more expensive. But this has nothing to do with academic freedom and, on the contrary, amounts to a direct refutation of the very purpose of federal labor law—to provide workers the ability to negotiate on a more even footing with their employers. The administration's argument, the Labor Board concluded, "runs directly contrary to the express purposes of the [National Labor Relations] Act."

THE ARGUMENT that most strains credulity may be that of Yale Law School dean Anthony Kronman, who suggested in the pages of the *New York Times* that a union might stunt the intellectual development of its members. Graduate students "are working to become individuals with distinctive views and voices," Kronman explains. "Collective bargaining, with its demand that one voice speak for all, is [not] compatible with the individualism of university life—the life the students have chosen precisely because it leaves them free to follow their own path and to speak for themselves." The notion that unionization might prevent individuals from finding their own intellectual voice requires such a dramatic suspension of belief that one almost feels insulted by the demand to treat this as a serious proposition. Perhaps Kronman has never heard of Albert Einstein—a member of Princeton's American Federation of Teachers faculty union; or never been impressed by the work of any graduates of the University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin, or other unionized schools; or never known anyone who teaches at Rutgers, the University of Massachusetts, or other campuses where faculty are organized. When pressed on this issue, Kronman backpedals, conceding that he would not advise college students against attending graduate school at a unionized campus or discourage faculty from taking a job there on the basis that it might restrict their intellectual development. Asked whether he would oppose a faculty union on these same grounds, Kronman stutters: "Oh boy, that's a difficult question to answer." Ultimately, he stresses that "we're talking about differences at the margin...the difference is not between night and day." Yet the fact that Kronman is prepared to make such ostentatious arguments on the basis of such subtle concerns suggests, again, that deeper motives may lurk beneath the rhetorical surface.

Indeed, all the arguments about academic freedom ring hollow for a simple reason: this problem has already been solved. Administrators often talk as if the prospect of academic bargaining is a new problem, fraught with unknown procedures and unpredictable pitfalls. In fact, the correct response to this worry is: been there, done that. Both graduate student unions and faculty unions have been conducting negotiations for decades; in all this time, there has never been a suggestion that academic freedom was compromised. "After nearly 30 years of experience with bargaining units of faculty members," the Labor Board concluded, "we are confident" that issues of academic versus employment considerations can be easily resolved.

Nevertheless, there is a meaningful—and disturbing—conception of "academic freedom" that animates administrators' opposition to unionization. It is telling that both NYU and Columbia administrators have pointed to charges that the Labor Board filed against Yale faculty in the wake of that school's 1996 graduate teachers' strike as evidence of the propensity of unions to chill academic freedom. In the case in question, Yale faculty and adminis-

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trators threatened strike participants with being banned from future teaching assignments; suggested that participants could be kicked out of graduate school; and adopted a policy allowing faculty advisers to write negative letters of recommendation on the basis of strike participation. These reprisals led the federal government to file charges against Yale administrators and faculty and to resolutions of censure against the school from the Modern Language Association, the American History Association, and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Ultimately, the government dropped most of its charges based on a technicality regarding the particular form of this strike—withholding undergraduate grades at the conclusion of the fall semester—even though such threats would clearly be illegal in the context of a normal teaching strike. The Labor Board agreed to a settlement on the remaining charges that required Yale to post prominent notices outside the graduate school administration offices promising that in the future no employee would be subject to threats for participation in union activities. Given that there is no question the threats voiced during the grade strike would be prima facie illegal in a normal strike action, it is curious that administrators have chosen to uphold these reprisals as the hallmark of academic freedom. For most of the academic community, academic freedom consists precisely in the protection against such threats. Nevertheless, Columbia administrators now cite the Yale case as an instance of unions threatening a hallowed right of academic freedom. Similarly, Yale provost Alison Richard charges that applying the Labor Board's standard of behavior to faculty—that is, banning the use of "threats" or "promises" to turn graduate students against the union—would undermine the fundamental nature of higher education. "These restrictions on what could be legally discussed with an employee,'" Richard insists, "would strike at the freedom of expression central to the whole conception of the university as an intellectual community."

In the minds of campus administrators, then, the principle of "academic freedom" has been reformulated along frighteningly Orwellian lines. The revised principle seems to boil down to the right of administrators to threaten those lower down the academic food chain. This debate over contrasting visions of academic freedom points, at the deepest levels, to what is at stake in campus organizing campaigns. Beyond the immediate economic issues of wages and benefits, this is a fight over the extent to which universities will be democratized. The romantic vision of the medieval university run by its scholars is long gone. But the difference between a democratized and corporatized university remains more critical than ever as universities face the future.

Faculty: Caught in the Crossfire?

The second front of the graduate unionization struggle is the administrators' war for the hearts and minds of campus faculty. Graduate student unions have repeatedly insisted that their conflict is solely with the central administration. Faculty have, in fact, found unions easy to work with. In a comprehensive survey of faculty at universities with established graduate student unions, 95 percent of faculty stated that graduate student collective bargaining did not inhibit the free exchange of ideas between faculty and graduate students; an overwhelming majority reported similarly that graduate student unions had not created an adversarial relationship, and that the union had not inhibited their ability to advise or mentor their own students. Administrators, though, have adopted a conscious strategy of placing faculty at the fulcrum of union conflicts. Thus, one school's recommendation to fellow administrators was to stock the university's negotiating committee with a majority of *faculty* members—even though they would have no final say over university positions. By forcing graduate students to negotiate with those who hold the most immediate power over their coursework, grades, and ultimate career prospects, administrators seek to gain an edge in intimidating graduate employees into substandard settlements. Faculty are encouraged to play this role, in part, by administration suggestions that unions threaten the freedoms of faculty themselves.

In fact, faculty may find that the biggest threat to academic freedom comes from above. Administrators' anti-unionism has too often led them to impose the equivalent of an academic state of emergency, in which the

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normal protections of faculty and graduate students are suspended, with everything subject to the single goal of beating back organizing efforts. Increasingly, these anti-union campaigns have threatened the liberties of faculty as well as graduate students. Earlier this year, for instance, the dean at the State University of New York at Buffalo removed Professor Barbara Bono from her position as chair of the English department after she refused to sign a letter threatening striking graduate student teachers with being banned from future employment. Professor Bono explained, "I was not going to turn to threatening my students." One might view this as a noble defense of the mentoring relationship. In the eyes of the administration, however, department chairs are delinquent in their duties if they refuse to be part of the anti-union machinery. Thus, Dean Charles Stiger explained that he removed Professor Bono because "she expressed considerable sympathy for the students' situation and didn't see that forceful action was required."

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PERHAPS THE most ominous such instance comes from NYU itself, where a prominent professor was fired after being the only non-tenured faculty member to testify before the NLRB in support of graduate student unionization. Professor Joel Westheimer had won "exceptional merit" performance reviews in every year until his Labor Board testimony and was unanimously recommended for tenure by the members of his department and all eight outside reviewers, but was terminated by School of Education dean Ann Marcus—who herself testified against the union in the Labor Board hearings. Westheimer's firing—ostensibly on the grounds of insufficient scholarship, despite the fact that he was awarded NYU's internal award for excellence in scholarship—set off a firestorm of protest both at NYU and in the national education community, in which a petition calling on NYU to reexamine this decision has been signed by four past presidents of the American Educational Research Association. In June, the NYU chapter of the American Association of University Professors held a press conference to denounce NYU's action, suggesting that the administration may have committed a "gross violation of the principles of academic freedom and free speech," and calling for a special community board hearing to examine threats to both graduate students and faculty engaged in campus labor issues. It now appears likely that, this fall, NYU officials will be dragged back into labor court to face new charges of violating federal law in the Westheimer firing.

Just as administrators may have feared, the success of graduate student unions has spurred increased organizing among other academic employees, including both adjunct and tenure-track faculty. Ironically, in the private sector, the same corporate ethos that has redefined the university may serve to reinstate the Labor Board's recognition of faculty as employees rather than managers, restoring the right of private university professors to organize. The *Yeshiva* decision drastically restricted faculty organizing on the basis that, in the model of medieval scholarly communities, faculty hold primary decision-making authority and therefore are themselves managerial employees with no right to organize. "If there were a single

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group comprising the essential heart of management," Yeshiva's lawyers insisted, "it would be the faculty." If this description of faculty-run universities was dated in 1980, it has become utterly untenable twenty years later. As the president of NYU's AAUP chapter notes, "today it's undeniable that universities. . . are modeled not on medieval guilds, governed by their members, but on modern corporations." Indeed, for the first time in two decades, the NLRB last year ruled that faculty at a private college have the right to organize, determining this time that faculty's authority was not truly managerial, but merely "advisory" to the administration. While the *Yeshiva* ruling remains in effect until challenged at the Supreme Court level, the recent reasoning of the Labor Board suggests that—with the dramatic changes in university governance over the past twenty years—faculty on more and more campuses may be defined as not fitting the fact-pattern outlined in *Yeshiva*. At some point, a new faculty union will force this principle to be reheard in federal court; and when this happens, the administrators who have remade the university in the decades since faculty were cut out of collective bargaining will be hard-pressed to keep a straight face while suggesting that faculty still run the place.

Where Do We Go From Here?

As we look to the future, there is every sign that the recent boom in graduate student unionization will continue. Some administrators may hope that a Bush-appointed Labor Board will overturn the NYU decision. However, Democratic control of the Senate makes it significantly harder to win approval of an aggressively pro-management board. Moreover, it will be hard for a new board to formulate a logic for reversing itself, since the recent decisions fit so much more appropriately with the reality of university operations than do the rulings from the mid-1970s that had previously restricted private-sector organizing.

While an outright reversal of the NYU precedent is unlikely, some administrators have pinned their hopes on an ambitious effort to redisguise graduate employment as training. On the final day of NYU's forty-two-day hearing before the Labor Board, the school's attorneys rushed into evidence a plan to make over the funding mechanism for graduate education as a whole. Under the new scheme, most graduate students will receive a fixed stipend for five years and will be required to teach several times in order to obtain their degree. Since teaching will then be an educational degree requirement, and graduate students will receive the same "stipend" during semesters when they teach as when they do not, the university argued that this plan would legally convert graduate teachers back into "students" and their work back into "training." The Labor Board rejected this last-minute maneuver; but similar efforts lie at the heart of current anti-union strategies at Yale, Columbia, and elsewhere.

Administrators face an uphill battle, because the reality of graduate student teaching loads makes it hard to conceal their work through the magic of newly invented degree requirements. For instance, the Labor Board's ruling was partly predicated on the fact that "the number of TA positions available is tied to undergraduate enrollment, not graduate enrollment." In order to disguise the work of graduate teachers as part of their own educational training, administrators must concoct elaborate rationales for "training" assignments that happen to match up perfectly with undergraduate teaching needs. Just such an effort is underway at Yale, where the graduate school instituted a plan in which each department is to determine, supposedly according to strictly pedagogical criteria, the number of semesters that their graduate students needed to teach in order to gain the proper professional training. Unsurprisingly, the Spanish department, which relies heavily on graduate teachers to staff introductory language courses, determined that the particular pedagogy of its profession requires Ph.D. candidates to teach introductory language classes for a minimum of four semesters; while classics, a small department with few undergraduate majors, determined that its discipline does not require any minimum teaching quota whatsoever. What accounts for the increased requirement in Spanish? Is it really so much more difficult to learn how to teach Spanish than to learn how to teach Greek? It is hard to imagine exactly how the university will justify this system un-

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der cross-examination before the Labor Board. Nevertheless, clumsy or not, this is the new project of private sector administrators in the wake of the NYU decision: an effort to defeat unionization through creative redefinition, giving everything new names without changing anything.

IT IS UNCLEAR what the chances of such a project are. The Internal Revenue Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and federal financial aid offices all have regulations based on the assumption that graduate teachers are employees; and it is unlikely that administrators' re-labeling projects will convince them not to deduct payroll taxes. Moreover, the amount of work done by graduate students is simply too great and too varied to be disguised out of existence. The bottom line, in the Labor Board's words, is that "the undergraduate students at NYU, qua customers, pay for the services they receive, which are provided to a large degree by the graduate assistants.... If the services were not provided by the graduate assistants, they would be provided by instructors who may be statutory employees." Thus, unless universities actually reverse the trends of the past three decades, dramatically cutting graduate teaching and boosting tenure-track hires, administrators appear to be stuck. And with all the creative strategies at their disposal, the one thing universities cannot do is decrease their reliance on graduate labor. The fact that administrators have responded to the NYU ruling not by finally honoring the democratic rights of their own graduate employees, but by devoting their primary energy to a transparently Orwellian scheme whose sole purpose is to disempower the very people the university is charged with mentoring, is a testament to administrators' desperation to maintain corporate control. We have moved very far from the model of the university as a community of scholars.

Finally, there is an on-the-ground reality to the new unions that will not be changed even if the law is reinterpreted. At NYU and Columbia, national union representatives warn that "once teachers have gotten organized, we will never go away. We have made a commitment—these people are part of our union—and law or no law we will stick with it to make sure there is a fair contract for graduate teachers." Perhaps the most prescient advice comes from leaders of the California state legislature. When University of California administrators refused to bargain with their graduate student union, the leaders of the state Assembly and Senate warned them that, all legalities aside, their strategy had plainly backfired: after a fifteen-year campaign to defeat unionization, "huge sums of state money have been spent... to circumvent recognition.. [but] the movement has grown stronger and deeper." ●

Organizing Graduate Students

by Gordon Lafer

A pamphlet of the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas

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Women and the Metamorphoses of Times Square

Marshall Berman

STAND IN Times Square at night, thrown every way by waves of light and people. It is easy to feel that you are in the belly of some great beast, and that the beast is being fed more and richer ingredients than it can possibly digest. Of course, you are one of these ingredients, even as you stand there trying to analyze the menu. All through its history, the Square has generated cascades of discourse and reflection; yet its visual presence is so overpowering, that it makes not only the answers but even the questions seem trivial. Thinking about the place can make you dizzy in some of the same ways as being there. One minute, you feel you are drowning in floods of talk and thought; a minute later, if you just step back and gaze around, the floods look like puddles. The dizzying metabolism of this place and the vertigo it inflicts are primary sources of its mystery.

All through the twentieth century, Times Square was a tremendous visual presence, not just in New York, but around the world. It was one of those great American "wonders of the world," a space the whole world recognizes as magnificent and sublime. Most of America's grand spaces—Niagara Falls, the Everglades, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone—are in the wilderness, a world away from the pressures of modern life. But Times Square lives and moves in the midst of modern life: it's the sublime that you can get to on the subway.

This essay is organized around the idea of Woman—or rather, around different forms of women and their changing relationships to Times Square. I want to start with several fragments and put them together into a coherent story. The first fragment is a souvenir postcard, supposedly dating from 1903, which I found in the Museum of the City of New York (reproduced in *Columbia Historical Portrait of New York,* edited by John Kouwenhoven. It is a collage of a woman and a building. The building is the new Times Tower: in 1903 it wasn't open for business yet, but its triangular structure and Renaissance façade were complete and laid out on Forty-Second Street. The

The Times Building, cartoon postcard, 1903. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.

This essay is adapted from the forthcoming *One Hundred Years of Spectacle: Metamorphoses of Times Square* and from a talk given at the Léo Bronstein Memorial lecture in April of this year.

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woman is a gigantic cartoon, dressed in the provocative outfit of a chorus girl. She is almost as big as the tower; she sits on it, entwines herself around it, smiles playfully and kicks her legs out like a girl on a swing. Fans of Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet, and Toulouse-Lautrec, and people who have seen *Moulin Rouge*, will recognize her Parisian image, but I haven't found her in the iconography of America's Gilded Age. (I don't mean that there weren't women who looked like her in New York and in every other American city. But they lived and moved in the shadows, in private places; their images were not flaunted in public or sent openly through the mails.) She is at home in public here in the way a soulful young clerk would be at home on the Nevsky Prospect in St. Petersburg. As the twentieth century dawns, she is just coming over the horizon, a sign of her times. I will call her "Times Girl." The conjunction of youth and this not-yet-finished building are a perfect symbol for the first "New Times Square."

MY SECOND fragment is a statistic that I found in Alexander Reichl's fine book *Reconstructing Times Square*, which derives from a demographic study of Forty-Second Street in the late 1970s. William Kornblum and his graduate students from the City University of New York sociology department had a grant to count the people on the street, between Sixth and Eighth Avenues. Reichl, reading Kornblum's numbers, is struck by the street's racial integration. I am struck by something else, which Reichl records but doesn't emphasize: its sexual segregation. Occupants of this street were "overwhelmingly male (90 percent)." There were virtually no women here; Forty-Second had become sex-segregated streets in the city. You would probably have to go to the meatpacking district to top that 90 percent. In historical perspective, this statistic gives Forty-Second Street a startling trajectory: it began as a public space where women could feel at home and gradually developed into its opposite, a place from which women were almost totally removed.

What has Times Square meant to a century of women? It has been a workplace for a tremendous assortment of women who, in Karl Marx's words, could "live only so long as they find work" and who "find work only as long as their labor increases capital," who have been forced to "sell themselves piecemeal" and compete with other women very like themselves, whose lives have been shaped by "the vicissitudes of competition and the fluctuations of the market." Women have entered the Square as a classic workplace, or as an arena for a great variety of entertainments, or as both. But it was also more: I believe it has played a major role in women's *Bildung*, in their moral education, the process of finding themselves, of identity formation, of growing up. It was a place where they could conduct what John Stuart Mill called "experiments in living." Of course, it has been the same for plenty of men. It helped both my mother and father move beyond the horizons of the Lower East Side ghetto where they grew up. But places like Times Square may have made more of a difference for women. This is because for everyone who wants to exist in this place or even to dream about it, its presence is so intensely *public*. In most societies through the ages, men's lives have been largely defined by their public roles. Women have been mostly locked up inside domestic and private cocoons, unable to participate in any sort of public life. A nursery rhyme that every child knows gets the classic gender polarity just right:

> Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater,
> had a wife but couldn't keep her.
> He put her in a pumpkin shell,
> and there he kept her very well.

For centuries, the only socially recognized "public women" were whores. The long-term process of modernization, and spinoffs such as democracy, city life, twentieth-century "consumer society," bright lights, and mass culture have created significant new openings for public life for both sexes. But women have had to come a longer way, to make a bigger leap, and to pay a greater price.

The women I want to talk about lived over four periods: first, the Square's early years, before World War I; second, the 1920s, "the jazz age," supposedly the Square's most dazzling period; third, the Great Depression, when the Square is inflated in Hollywood mythology, even as it deflates in everyday reality; and fi-

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nally, the Square's decline after World War II and its redevelopment in the last decade.

1900: A Star Is Born

In the 1900s, Times Square got the name we know it by today. The *Times*'s new corporate headquarters opened with an extravagant fireworks display on the stroke of midnight, on New Year's day 1905. It was a twenty-five-story skyscraper with a dashing modern form like the triangular Flatiron Building and handsome detailing that evoked the Florentine Renaissance. The building was universally praised, and its image, beaming floodlights over the city, was reproduced on mass postcards and in Sunday rotogravures. The floodlights shone on special occasions at least till the 1930s. In 1904, the Square became the terminal point for the new IRT and BMT subways. The subways brought tens of thousands of people every day; they not only instantly made Forty-Second Street and Broadway the most crowded place in New York, but connected it directly with far-flung immigrant neighborhood in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens. The enormous neo-Baroque Astor Hotel opened in 1905. It was instantly beloved, especially by producers and consumers of "show business," but also by tourists looking for New York "flavor"; it was still beloved when (and even after) it was abruptly destroyed in 1965. These buildings expanded the architectural scale, paved the way for more big buildings, mostly office towers, and enlarged both the day and night populations.

The thousands of people who worked around the Square every day became a primary market for the theaters, restaurants, dance halls, and cabarets that thrived by night; these entertainments expanded radically to meet the enlarged market. Meanwhile, the development of electric power in the 1900s made it feasible to install enormous electric signs, sometimes mounted on the roofs of shorter older buildings, sometimes on the façades of big new ones. Years of conflict between the Broadway and Fifth Avenue owners' associations led to a plan to restrict electric signs in most of Manhattan, but to concentrate them around Times Square. In 1909, a state court overturned a city law limiting their size. Nearly overnight, a new generation of huge, bright, kinetic signs came to life. These signs gave the Square a new scale of fame and nourished the fantasy lives of people all over the world.

In the great crowds that poured out of the subways, down from the elevated trains, off the trolleys and into the Square every day, there was an amazing variety of women of all classes and ethnicities: cooks, bakers, waitresses, seamstresses, milliners, maids, office cleaners, salesgirls for all commodities, actresses and singers and dancers, wardrobe mistresses and costumers, switchboard operators, fashion models, theater ushers and dressers, nightclub hatcheck girls, office clerks, typists, stenographers, bookkeepers, and on and on. And thousands more every day and night came into the Square as customers for its infinite varieties of entertainment. There may never have been such a vast variety of women thrown together in any one place before. Some of these women were prostitutes, professionally offering many varieties of sex, appealing to customers in every class. Nonprofessionals offered themselves to coworkers, bosses, or customers, sometimes in hope of a respectable marriage, other times settling for such cruder satisfactions as furs, jewels, and money for the rent. Some would have died rather than give up their virginity, yet sought alluring ways to present their sexuality in the ways they dressed, moved, spoke. All this gave the Square an aura of tremendous sexual promise. And it frightened the hell out of many moralists, religious and secular, politically right and left, who agitated in vain for laws that would shut down the theaters and subways and close down the whole town by 10 p.m. They vilified Times Square as a place that would drive "women out of control"; they called it "the capital of dangerous love."

Sister Carrie, by Theodore Dreiser (1900), the first serious novel focused on Times Square, is certainly a book about dangerous love. So much of the history and reality of Times Square comes to life in this book, written even before the Square got its name. Carrie Meeber, Dreiser's heroine, starts out as a Wisconsin farm girl, boarding a train for Chicago, driven not by a will to succeed or get rich but by a vaguer, more general yearning for a better life. Five hundred pages and ten years later, she is a star on Broadway risen from the

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chorus overnight as Carrie Madenda, toast of the town, her (new) name in lights. But her rise coincides with the fall of Edward Hurstwood, the man who brought her to New York, whom she loved once, and who gave up his whole life for her. One up, one down. Dreiser calls Carrie's theatrical company "the Casino," maybe to dramatize his sense of the randomness of fate. (There really was such a company, on Thirty-Ninth and Broadway, just up from the Met, just down from the Square. But nothing has been recorded about what *Sister Carrie* might have meant to them.)

Dreiser's Carrie isn't beautiful or smart in any conventional way; what makes her special to people is a kind of "emotional greatness," a soulful "longing for that which is better." She is innocent of the Gilded Age pretension that comes naturally to most of the people around her. But her empathy and soulfulness disappear when her middle-aged lover stumbles and starts to fall. If she can move onward and upward, why can't he? When he says he can't get a job in New York, she responds not just with impatience but with a condescension that is new and startling: "You couldn't have tried so very hard, . . . I got something."

Where did she learn to talk this way? Where does naïveté end and cruelty begin? She leaves him, concentrates on her career on the stage, and manages not to see what she knows is going on just offstage. A year or two later, he has crumbled into a drunken bum, dressed in rags, his body and face caved in, not far from starvation. In this form he encounters her by the Casino Theatre, where she is now a star.

> "Why, George," she said, "what's the matter with you?"
>
> "I've been sick," he answered. "I just got out of the hospital. For God's sake, let me have a little money, will you?"
>
> "Of course," said Carrie, her lip trembling. ". . . But what's the matter with you anyhow?"
>
> She was opening her purse, and now pulled out all and the only bills in it, a five and two twos.
>
> "I've been sick, I told you. . ."
>
> "Here," she said. "It's all I've got with me."
>
> "All right," he answered softly. "I'll give it back to you some day."

People stare at this odd couple. Dreiser tells us she is embarrassed, and so is he. She seems paralyzed with guilt and anxiety, and keeps asking him what is the matter. He says he lives on the Bowery now.

> "Better go on in," he said. "I'm much obliged but I won't bother you any more."
>
> She tried to answer but he turned away and shuffled off toward the east.

Carrie knows which way he is going. "Toward the east" signifies the East River, and, in the language of 1900, this river means death. She would give and share more if she could, but it is clear that nobody can help him now. Given the overpowering depression with which Dreiser afflicts him, probably no one could have helped him before, either. But here she learns what we have known all along: she got off the death train too early.

In Carrie's era, there were two other very striking images of women in Times Square. The first was a notorious electric sign, a fifty-foot-high ad for "Heatherbloom Petticoats, Silk's Only Rival." This sign originated in 1909, part of the first generation of signs with no size limit. It moved according to an elaborate electronic program and showed "a girl caught in a storm, with her skirts fluttering back and forth at the mercy of swirling rain and gusts of wind." This sign not only stopped traffic—it prefigures Sam Shaw's 1952 image of Marilyn Monroe photographed for *The Seven Year Itch*—but seems to have been very effective in stimulating sales. Sales to whom? Not to the most affluent women in the Square, who would have surely stuck with silk, since ancient times a symbol of class. The targets of the ad must have been seamstresses and switchboard operators on their way to work, or schoolteachers and stenographers going to plays. What the ad promised is something that the New York garment industry, just a few blocks down, knew how (and still knows how) to deliver: cheap knockoffs of expensive fabrics and designs, aristocratic fantasies that a plebeian mass public could afford. I have never seen a Heatherbloom Petticoat, but still I know how it was structurally similar to the electrified mass culture embodied in its sign. It presupposed a large num-

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ber of respectable women who would respond to a public, flamboyant sexual display and buy a garment that they hoped would help them change themselves in its image.

This is just the sort of thing that scared many people about the Square. An editorial from around 1910, noting that many dance halls were opening up there, lamented

> the hodge-podge of people in which respectable young married and unmarried women, and even debutantes, dance not only under the same roof but in the same room with women of the town.

The writer thought that this "hodge-podge" would give respectable women wild ideas, would inspire them to break down the walls between their supposedly sheltered lives and the lives of "women of the town." Looking on a century later, we have to agree that, to a large extent, the fears were justified.

What were those angry moralists afraid of? "The principle of the modern world," Hegel said in the 1820s, "is freedom of subjectivity." Let's think about public spaces now. A great public space puts everybody in it on display. In traditional cultures, "women of the town" are routinely displayed, but respectable women are displayed only at specified times (for example, festivals), and then only under the control of others: parents, husbands, elders, priests. Very early in its life, Times Square emerged as a place where respectable women had the freedom to *display themselves*. When women walking through the Square looked at each other, or at women characters and actresses (and fellow audience members) in plays or in the movies, or at singers and dancers in clubs or cabarets, or at figures on the giant signs around and above them, we should try to see their glances as part of their *Bildung*, their growth as human beings. Visions of other women suggested people they might want to know or imitate or hope to become. (A different but similar spectrum opened up when they looked at men.) For women looking for ways to be modern, to change themselves, to become sexual *subjects* as well as objects, the Square was a great fair of human possibilities, an ideal *democratic space*. Of course, for women (or for men) who did not want to change, or who wanted not to change, Times Square was a far more problematical place.

And then we have Times Girl. . .

Look at her! See how her arms, shoulders, and legs are visible, her skirts blowing in the wind. She curves her right hip into the building's phallic tower and caresses it with her right hand, while she kicks her right leg out into the expanse of Broadway. I'm a bit surprised that a Post Office haunted by Anthony Comstock let this card be sent through the mails. Times Girl's sexiness is open and artless, casual and messy, without apparent shame or guilt, but also without pomp or pretension; she looks nice rather than "dangerous." Her style prefigures the formula that Florenz Ziegfeld would develop for his Follies: full-blown sexuality combined with the artless sweetness of "the girl next door." We will meet her descendants in *42nd Street, Guys and Dolls, Gypsy, A Chorus Line,* and in many *films noirs*.

The Times Girl is not only Sister Carrie's kid sister, she is the twentieth century's first comic hero. (Chaplin's tramp, who resembles her, may be the second.) She stretches and spreads herself out over an abyss. She looks undefended, like an open city. But somehow, with her hand on the Times Tower, she is not only keeping her balance but having a good time, and maybe even laughing at herself. Still, the force of her comedy depends on her closeness to tragedy. She is too close! She kicks her legs up with the exuberance of a girl on a swing; but we know that although Times Square may be a place to play, it's no playground, and it's a long way down. She knows it herself and puts her appeal in the mail. She shows the world her spirit along with her flesh. Look at her again and you will see a classic archetype of a modern woman on her own, inhabiting the city center but living close to the edge, surrounded by men and institutions who want her lights, but wouldn't think of recognizing her rights. By virtue of her verve and nerve, she incarnates what Baudelaire in the 1840s called "the heroism of modern life."

Four Notes on the 1920s

1. The arrival of Jews in Times Square, especially East European Jews, born "on the other side" enriched vaudeville and popular comedy,

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which flourished in the Square. In and around the "Tin Pan Alley" of the Brill Building, they created innovative forms of popular song. They worked more easily than their predecessors with black performers and grasped black music. (This is what the classic Jerome Kern–Paul Robeson *Showboat* is all about.) They manifested their presence by obtrusively "hanging out," in delicatessen-type restaurants like Lindy's or directly on the street. (People who didn't like them said they treated the Square like a ghetto.) They made the neighborhood far more informal than it had been before World War I. They elaborated a kind of jivetalk that American youth immediately took to heart. They moved easily between media—vaudeville, theater, cabaret, radio, movies—and imagined "mass culture" before sociologists did; they created a press and a language to talk about it.

2. The "working girls" of all ethnicities provided an increasing proportion of the people around the Square. My mother, ace stenographer, was one of this company; she and my father met and fell in love on West Forty-Fifth Street and went to the theater and dancing there for hundreds of nights till the kids came along. Look back at *Classified*, a wonderful 1926 silent film about the girls who work the phones to solicit ads for a *Times*esque newspaper. They hitch rides from various points uptown, and by the time they hit the north end of the Square, they have to fight the drivers off. The heroine is Babs Comet, "a girl whose earning capacity fell short of her yearning capacity."

3. And then there was the Light, which was spectacular before the First World War, but seems to have become truly overpowering in the 1920s. (People who had been there both before and after the war were always saying this, and photographs convey some sense of what they were talking about.) People increasingly spoke of the Square as a kind of psychedelic environment, "Dream Street." The great bath of light flooded many people's minds in an ecstatic way. Other people worried. What worried them in the 1920s, so they said, was the power of this spectacle to render people—usually young people, often female people, but really all people—"blinded by the light."

4. *Sunrise*. When *The Jazz Singer* created a sensation in October 1927, it obliterated what may have been the greatest film ever made in Hollywood, F. W. Murnau's *Sunrise*, which had opened just a few days before. The two films share many of the same themes. Murnau's hero is a family farmer who is at both an economic and a psychic dead end. He falls for the city girl whom they have taken in as a summer boarder. Enraptured with her, he dreams of an abstract, psychedelic landscape that is very suggestive of the "Dream Street" incarnation of Times Square. He thinks of killing his wife (Dreiser's *American Tragedy* had just appeared); he attacks her, but pulls back as she flees. Just then, like a spirit in a fairy tale, a trolley car suddenly materializes in the depths of the forest. Magically yet realistically, it transports the shaken couple to a real city. They spend a tourist day exploring the city, and Murnau makes the trip transform them both. It is the wife, played by Janet Gaynor, in whose changes we really believe. She begins the story totally absorbed in farm work and care of her baby and emotionally dead. In the city, she comes to life, and grows into an animated, vibrant, radiantly sexual person. Now the husband no longer needs a city girl: by plunging into the city, his wife has become that girl. Murnau's surreal Times Square is the medium of her metamorphosis.

The Depression and the Working Girl

All writers on Times Square in the 1930s talk about its economic depletion and creeping sleaziness. Most of the theaters went dark or were taken over by cinema or burlesque. Elegant restaurants went bankrupt and were replaced with fast food joints; stylish boutiques gave way to Army-Navy stores. In this period, Damon Runyon's Times Square writing canonized a whole generation of small-time hustlers of both sexes who spent their lives hanging around. My parents assured me that the Square really was full of people like those guys and dolls, but they were hanging around because it was the depression and there was no work.

So far as I can tell, the most compelling visions of Broadway in the Great Depression emanate from Hollywood: *42nd Street*, *Stage Door*, the Busby Berkeley *Gold Diggers* series,

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and, at the very end of the thirties, Dorothy Arzner's *Dance Girl Dance*. Why should this be? At a time when Hollywood was on a roll of spectacular prosperity, many people benefiting from this roll still believed that the theater, so much more precarious and vulnerable than the movies, was correspondingly more "authentic." These films are all about the backstage world, the world behind the world of illusion; they are about how theatrical illusions are created by real people, members of real hierarchies of power, willing to sell themselves in exchange for real money—but often unable to find buyers. Ironically, the very depletion and desperation that enveloped depression-era Broadway qualified that neighborhood, maybe for the first time in its history, to represent a real world.

There is one more important thing these movies share. They all uphold the Times Girl tradition of portraying the showgirl—the girl in the chorus line, not the star—as Times Square's Representative Man. These 1930s films, although they hardly ever use anything that could be called Marxist language, shift consciousness in what we have to call a Marxist direction. They all highlight showgirls as members of a class, as victims of collective forms of suffering, as human subjects with a collective awareness, and as heroines in a collective struggle.

One of the most poignant 1930s meditations on individuality and collectivity is Busby Berkeley's "Lullaby of Broadway" number from the *Gold Diggers of 1935*. The star of this number, playing Times Girl in the thirties, is Wini Shaw. She is its star, not only in the sense that she does more acting and singing and gets more screen time than anybody else, but also in the sense that the whole number, with its cast of hundreds, is about her, her fantasies about herself, her quest for identity. Everything is dramatized as if it is her dream. So far as I know, this is the one place in Berkeley's *oeuvre* where he focuses on an individual and her inner life. Of course, he brings us his usual Piranesian vistas and Gargantuan choruses; but now they mean far more than usual, because, instead of just dropping these tropes on our heads from some Olympian sky, he shows us how they can spring organically from a woman's life, from "her yearning capacity." (Some people call his landscapes "fascist," but surely not this one: fascists don't like inwardness.)

The most famous shot in this number comes at its dramatic climax, when, pressed by a great crowd, the girl plunges over a balcony—is her plunge an accident, a suicide, or a symbol of female orgasm? But the image that is richest and most profound comes at the very start of her dream. She sings the "Lullaby" slowly, with only faint accompaniment; her face luminous against a background of total blackness, putting special stress on one of the last lines: "Your baby goes home to her flat, to sleep all day." Then the camera zooms in, and settles at closeup range. She smiles up at us, her black hair curling over her face; then she lights up (is this Reefer Madness?)—and suddenly *her face becomes the city*: her eyes, nose, mouth, metamorphose into a landscape of midtown New York. Now she sings the same song again, but with a jazzy tempo, backed by a big swing band. As her dream unfolds, a metropolitan crowd surrounds her, and she alternately merges with the crowd and emerges from it. She finds herself inside an immense ballroom: at first, she seems part of the chorus; then suddenly she turns blonde, and becomes Ginger Rogers, and gets whirled in the air by a man who travesties Fred Astaire; then she is on a balcony, watching the crowd, with a movie star, Dick Powell; then Powell sings to her that she should join the crowd; then she sings to the crowd, in an invitation both sexual and political, "Why don't you come and get me?"; then, dancing, she leads the crowd up and up a spiral staircase, to the penthouse where she will make her great leap. She plunges down into the cityscape, and now the great first shot is reversed: the city becomes her face. She slides back into sleep, and wakes up just in time for another night on the town.

August 1945: The Couple and the Crowd

One of the great moments in the history of Times Square took place in August 1945, just after the surrender of Japan and the end of World War II. Since the coming of the subways in 1904, the Square has been the most crowded place in New York. Some people say it's the most crowded place in the world. I've heard citizens of Tokyo and Calcutta say that

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their hometown crowds are pallid in comparison. And our subways (alone in the world, I believe) run all through the night, so that the crowds can gather twenty-four hours a day, and New York can enjoy some cachet as "the city that never sleeps." During the Second World War, many factories were running night shifts in the garment center, just a few blocks to the south. The subways were more jammed than ever and the late crowds even thicker; moreover, they were full of sailors, whose ships were docked along the Hudson just a quarter mile to the west. So there was plenty of life flowing through the wartime Square. But it flowed in darkness, as the Square, like all the rest of New York, was enveloped by a blackout. Moreover, at the request of the Civil Defense Administration, everyone was dressed in black, so that people looked both spectral and menacing. The great Times Square signs were also dark, ghosts of their former selves, and giant *mementi mori* for everyone who thought about things like death.

IN THIS CONTEXT, imagine the power surge on the night of August 15, when, after years in the dark, all the lights in the Square came on. Millions of watts of power came on, a rainbow of neon colors came on, Lady Liberty's floodlights came on, the Times building's zipper came on, the three hundred-foot-long Wrigley Spearmint waterfall came on, the Camel sign with the soldier blowing smoke rings came on. People shrieked, jumped up and down, danced, hugged and kissed each other, squeezed not only the friends and loved ones they had come to the Square with, but total strangers in the crowd whom they'd never seen and would never see again.

This magic moment was carefully choreographed. The office of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, the theaters whose marquees flashed all through the Square, the corporations that flaunted their logos on extravagant signs, the companies that designed and installed the signs, Con Edison the electric company, and the *Times*, were all involved in the choreography. In the course of that magical summer, the great power surge was repeated, often with jazz accompaniment. (Acoustically, the big swing bands of 1945 were said to fit the Square very well.) But the fact that mass spectacles are constructed and programmed does not mean that they are fakes. This was the end of a war that had killed more than thirty million people, including six million Jews, a great many with families among the two million Jews in and around New York. Victory meant the destruction of one of the most murderous regimes in history. How could people not have felt ecstatic?

There is one canonical image that captures the moment with a special luminosity. This is a photograph by Alfred Eisenstadt, published in *Life* magazine. The picture is taken in daylight, near the center of the Square, looking north. It includes a large crowd, but it features a sailor and a young woman, seen from behind, dressed like a nurse. The girl has just, a second ago, thrown herself into the sailor's arms. We don't know anything about this couple, but they look like strangers. There seems to be no personal intimacy between them; they are not, for instance, looking into each other's eyes, like the young lovers in so many thousands of street snapshots in the Kertesz-Bresson tradition. But there is recognition: in some essential way—this is the photo's charm—they know and they are known. The girl seems to have hurled herself with great enthusiasm: as she grasps him hard, her purse swings ahead of her, her legs kick up behind. The sailor's body language seems uncertain, but he has probably grasped what we can see (or is it just the camera angle?), that if he doesn't get a better foothold fast, the momentum of her body is going to throw them both to the ground. But we intuitively trust him, as the photographer wants us to: although a kid, he will compose himself and straighten up fast. Eisenstadt's postwar celebration is so memorable because it reads as a parable of "The Good War" itself—America's last good war. The photo's moment may have been the last moment when people understood not only Times Square, but New York City itself, as symbols of America.

The Street Splits

Now, one way to see Times Square in the second half of the twentieth century might be this: *sailor and girl split up.*

West Forty-Second Street, anchor of the

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Square, came to reproduce the social order of the ship—all mates, no dames—while the girl and her friends came to feel that there was no place for them on what used to be their street. This might help explain the strikingly intense female rage toward Times Square in the 1970s and 1980s. For fifteen years or so, no woman I know would go there. If I was walking a student to the Eighth Avenue subway or the Port Authority Bus Terminal, if I was going with a woman to a Broadway or an Off-Off Broadway play, we would have to take the most elaborate detours to avoid Forty-Second Street. The detour blocks—Fortieth or Forty-First Streets, Ninth Avenue—offered plenty of sleaze in their own right. But none of those blocks had an *aura,* the way Forty-Second Street has had an aura since Times Girl's day. And in the 1970s and 1980s, when Forty-Second Street was called "the Deuce," a large part of that aura was an assault on women's identity. I don't understand exactly how this came to be, but it is important to see that it was real. If we face the reality of this collective sense of assault, it may help us grasp what happened next.

Alexander Reichl, in his *Reconstructing Times Square*, gives a highly detailed account of a spectacular real estate giveaway, featuring billion-dollar subsidies to some of the richest and most bloated corporations in the world. He shows how the Forty-Second Street urban renewal project destroyed many small-scale urban resources that were perfectly viable and delivered nothing to the public in return. He shows how city residents will be paying higher taxes to subsidize vast and unearned profits for a generation. His policy analysis is incisive and trenchant. But when he tries to explain how the public could let itself be suckered into such a disgrace, his house goes dark. His only explanation is that the public saw the Street as black turf (even though, as he shows by the numbers, it wasn't) and felt nothing but racist revulsion. He notes something else—"the real pattern of dominance [on Forty-Second Street] was based on gender"—but he misses its significance. The fact is, half the people in "the public" had come to feel the street life of Forty-Second Street as a direct assault on them. If my analysis of Times Square cultural traditions is right, then women have felt a special intimacy with Forty-Second Street that goes back for generations. You would expect them to feel especially betrayed to find themselves excluded from a street they used to call their own.

The Nineties: The Three Witches Rule

In the 1990s, the bureaucrats who were most powerful in dragging the renewal plan forward, and destroying the dilapidated Deuce, were three smart and articulate women, collectively known as the "Three Witches": Rebecca Robertson of the State Urban Development Corporation, Gretchen Dykstra of the Times Square Business Improvement District, and Cora Cahan of The New Forty-Second Street Foundation.

All these women were graduates of elite schools and colleges; their presence marked the ascent of women into the highest ranks of corporate and political management. They all came on with implacable hauteur. Those of us who heard them at hearings and in interviews could see substantial differences in their sensibilities and views of the world. But one thing they shared was a strong feeling that the Deuce was a danger, not only to them but to *all* women; in response to the social and psychic splits it expressed, they wanted to split its head open. Opponents of the plan never recognized this rage. And they didn't see that it was shared by many of New York's most educated and civically active women, who would ordinarily have been the fiercest fighters against a plan to kill a street. Their rage was more than a front for racism or real estate deals, it was real and went deep.

In Martin Scorsese's classic 1976 film *Taxi Driver*, Cybil Shepherd is their representative. Robert De Niro finally convinces Shepherd to go out with him, but then he takes her to a porn flick on West Forty-Second Street. She is aghast and walks out in revulsion. He is embarrassed and confused: he didn't mean to hurt her. But he just doesn't get it. Paul Schrader's screenplay puts it this way: "He is so much a part of his own world, he fails to comprehend another's world." Something like this could be said about all the people in the last decade who have come to nostalgically glorify the Deuce. They just don't get it. They flunk the basic skills test for city living: they simply look through the

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people with whom they need to share space. However, you could ask whether *anybody* involved in recent Times Square controversies could pass this test. The Three Witches came from a generation of women who had every reason to feel betrayed by the Square in its *Midnight Cowboy* incarnation. But we still have to ask whether a sense of betrayal is a good basis for urban policy.

Robertson, Dykstra, and Cahan knew that one of their big jobs was to reassure people that the plan wasn't in fact going to kill the street. Thus Robertson said the New Times Square would be more diverse and inclusive than any theme park or suburban mall:

> When we're done, we'll have 60 different stories on Forty-Second Street, arguing, fighting for product and advertising space. There are going to be conflicts. The idea is [to] make it a place of stories, which comes from all that crass commercialism. (*New York Times*, June 25, 1996)

A place of stories. With great cleverness, Robertson was invoking one of New York's classic mottos, "There are eight million stories in the naked city." Alas, stories of nakedness weren't in her playbook. When an animal-rights group tried to mount a billboard that portrayed a nude image of the model Pamela Lee testifying she would rather wear nothing at all than wear fur, the corporation said no: "too racy for Times Square." This ad had already run in the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times Magazine*, and soon it found a home beyond the Three Witches' reach, on classy Fifty-Seventh Street, right next to Carnegie Hall.

Remember WAP, the Women Against Pornography group that led Take Back The Night marches through the sleaziest parts of the Deuce all through the 1970s? That group made itself famous not just for feeling rage but for expertly deploying and manipulating it. Its members constructed a politics of demonology that would have done any southern demagogue proud. WAP is gone, but the Three Witches (and those who followed them) carry on its tradition of magical thinking. In fact, this thinking works better in corporate and bureaucratic suites than it ever worked in the street. Robertson, Dykstra, and Cahan deserve to be recognized as authentic Times Girls, stretch-

Cora Cahan, president of New 42d Street; Rebecca Robertson, head of the 42d Street Development Project; and Gretchen Dykstra, president of the Times Square B.I.D. Photo by Chang W. Lee/New York Times, 1996.

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ing their silken legs over Broadway, working through the night to destroy Times Square in order to save it.

But this has never been the only feminist perspective. There have always been more libertarian ways to stand up for women. In fact, libertarian feminist discourse was especially rich in the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to writers like Angela Carter, Ellen Willis, Alice Echols, Ann Snitow, Kate Ellis, Jessica Benjamin, Carol Gould, and many more. The complexities and contradictions of their shared sensibility are clear just in the titles of some of their books: *Powers of Desire, The Sadean Women, Pleasure and Danger, The Bonds of Love.* One feature of the literature they produced, which I've never heard discussed, was its urbanism and its desire to fight for a shared vision of city life. Many of these writers went out of their way to celebrate sleazy neighborhoods from the standpoint of *Bildung*: women needed places to go where they could reimagine and rework their sexuality and their selves. Sometimes they especially named Times Square, possibly in response to WAP manifestos, which had demanded that Times Square be wiped off the face of the earth. But the fact was that when the crunch came, no libertarian feminists were willing to stand up for Forty-Second Street. (Not that it would have made a difference if they had!) Their failure to do so should make it clear how far gone the Square was, and why it had to go.

Where will women fit into the Times Square of the twenty-first century? The question is part of a bigger one: where will *anyone* fit into this place? This is the first year that it's possible to see what the new Square really looks like. Many of the new buildings are bigger and more overbearing than what they replaced, but some of the new lines are surprisingly graceful and delicate. Thanks to progress in computer graphics, the best of the new signs are more thrilling than ever. Best new building: the Forty-Second Street Rehearsal Hall, right next to the American Airlines Theatre. Best new sign: NASDAQ, mounted on the north side of the Condé Nast Building at Seventh Avenue and Forty-Third Street. As NASDAQ's book value keeps plunging, we will see if the sign survives. In the summer of 2001, the sign's great moving picture went dead. It now transmits only stock quotations. If it fails to revive, it will be mourned by many people who have no love for its market values.

I HAVEN'T FIGURED out where I fit in here. But meanwhile, lots of teenage kids seem to be fitting themselves in just fine. One of the places they fit is under the giant picture window of the new MTV studio, on the west side of Broadway between Forty-Fourth and Forty-Fifth. MTV's presence is as commercial as can be, nourished by big tax breaks, but it also fits into Times Square's century-old history as a production site as well as an exhibition space for advanced mass media. If the MTV kids are lucky, they will get to see themselves on television. Even if they don't get on TV, they may make it into the pages of one of the Condé Nast magazines (*Vogue* and others) produced in the gigantic building just across the street. "On Monday afternoon," Neil Strauss wrote in the *Times* last spring,

> Adam Gassman, a 14-year-old from Queens, stood amid a gaggle of teenybopper girls outside MTV's Times Square studios, as he does almost every day after school. While the schoolgirls begged producers to let them into the studios for the day's taping of "Total Request Live," Adam looked on dour-faced. In his hand was a large white sign with two words sloppily scrawled in thin black marker: TUPAC LIVES.

This is a demonstration at once *against* Times Square and *within* it. I'm not sure what I think about the late rapper Tupac Shakur, but I'm impressed with his young fan. The one-man demonstration is a classic modernist form, put on the map by Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes From Underground.* If a high school student can create one, can *be* one here, and can make it into the *Times*, it may be a sign, not only that the kids are going to be all right, but that the "New Times Square," with its blend of electronics, groupies, demonstrators, spectators, and reporters, is going to be a fruitful place.

One last point. In the endless talk about Times Square, there's a lot of silliness that passes for urbanism on the left. People express horror and indignation that the Square's big buildings, its bright lights and fire signs, its

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music and theater and cinema, are all "commercial," put there by rich corporations that hope to get even richer. Some of these people sound like Claude Rains in *Casablanca*, when he says he is "shocked, shocked" to hear that there is gambling. Rains orders his assistant to "arrest the usual suspects." Many New Yorkers today, in their relationship to one of the city's primary spaces, are *arresting themselves*. They are cordoning themselves off, not only from a great source of joy, but from the moral and psychological growth that city life can bring. Our cities—and our citizens—need bright lights as badly as they need critical thought. Both are part of what Henri Lefebvre calls "The Right to the City." It's a right for which the left has to learn to fight, not only against our rulers but even sometimes against ourselves, against our desire for purity and perfection. A great, impure public place like Times Square is big enough to hold us all. To be part of it is not only a human right; we can also get there on the subway. ●

MARSHALL BERMAN's latest book is *Adventures in Marxism*.

Author's note: One of the most striking things about Times Square has been its capacity to generate discourse. These books, listed chronologically, are all interesting and valuable, but they barely scratch the surface. I have been writing about Times Square for years (see "The Lure of Times Square," *Dissent*, Fall 1997), and hope to finish a book on it, to be called *One Hundred Years of Spectacle: Metamorphoses of Times Square*: Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, 1900 (first uncensored version, University of Pennsylvania and Viking Penguin, 1981); Brooks Atkinson, *Broadway* (Macmillan, 1970); William Kornblum, editor, *42nd Street: The Bright Lights District* (City University of New York, 1978); Alix Kates Shulman, *On the Stroll* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1981); Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Night Life and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (University of Chicago, 1981); Paul Schrader, *Taxi Driver* (Faber and Faber, 1990); William Taylor, editor, *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World* (Russell Sage, 1991); Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1992); Geoffrey O'Brien, *The Times Square Story* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1998); Samuel Delaney, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York University, 1999); and Alexander Reichl, *Reconstructing Times Square: Politics & Culture in Urban Development* (University of Kansas, 1999).

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Redefining Power in the Global Age: Eight Theses

Ulrich Beck

How should such concepts as power, dominance, and authority be redefined from a cosmopolitan perspective? I have eight theses.

1. The world economy stands in relation to the state as a kind of meta-power; it can change the national and international rules. The economy has broken out of the cage of territorially and nationally organized power conflict and has acquired new power moves in digital space. It's like playing chess and changing the rules of the game along the way. The pawn—the economy—suddenly becomes the knight (given new possibilities of mobility by information technology) and can thus checkmate the king—the state. But perhaps the state can also jump and checkmate the knight-economy in new ways.

From what do capital strategies draw their new meta-power? The basic principle was summed up in the headline of an east European newspaper on the occasion of the visit of the German chancellor: "We Forgive the Crusaders and Await the Investors." It is the precise opposite of the classic theory of power: the threat is no longer of an invasion but of the non-invasion (or withdrawal) of investors. There is only one thing worse than being overrun by big multinationals: *not* being overrun by multinationals.

This kind of authority is not tied to the execution of orders but to the possibility of going somewhere else—to other countries—to make better investments. It introduces the threat of not doing something; that is, of not investing in *this* country. The new global economic power of big business is, in this sense, not founded on violence as the ultimate rationale, and this makes it much more mobile; power is not tied to any specific location, and consequently, it can be disposed globally.

While the power of states (according to the national rationale) grows through territorial conquest, the power of the players in the global economy grows precisely to the extent that they become extraterritorial factors. The power of the state is thus not undermined or broken by another state's power, by military threat or conquest, but rather *de*territorially, *ex*territorially—by way of transnational trade and activity in digital space. This deterritorial conception reverses the logic of the traditional understanding of power, violence, and authority.

Not imperialism but non-imperialism, not invasion but the retreat of investors is what constitutes the nucleus of global economic power. The deterritorialized power of business need neither be politically obtained nor legitimated. Its implementation avoids the institutions of developed democracy such as parliaments and courts. This nonviolent, invisible, intentional threat of withdrawal or inaction is neither conditional upon consent nor even capable of achieving it. This meta-power is neither illegal nor legitimate; it is translegal, but it changes the rules of the national and international systems.

The analogy between the military rationale of power and the economic rationale of power is evident: investment capital is the equivalent of firepower—with the big difference that the threat of not firing enlarges the power. Product development subsidized by the state is the equivalent of weapon innovation. Taxes can be defense strategies protecting national markets against global invaders. Offense is the best defense, and that means research and development, force-fed with government support and the taxpayers' money. And, of course, ideological war has been replaced by the discourse of globalization.

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The power of not investing capital exists everywhere. Globalization is not a choice. It is nobody's rule. No one is in charge, no one started it, no one can stop it. It is a kind of organized irresponsibility. You keep looking for someone who is responsible, to whom you can complain. But there is nobody at the other end of the line, no e-mail address. The more the globalization discourse dominates all areas of life, the more powerful capital strategies become. But this still does not mean that managers are ruling the world. It is important to stress that the meta-power of withdrawing investments does not depend on managerial princes who actively pursue a political agenda. Rather, they happen to do "politics" as a side effect. Their involvement is neither political nor nonpolitical. It is a kind of global sub-politics.

Two unseen consequences of this sub-political meta-power are remarkable. Until now, the rules of the game in world politics have been bloody and imperialistic. The new global meta-power is in its essence pacifist (though maybe not in its consequences). The power of global capitalism derives from potential nonconquest. Of course, global capital has to be localized somewhere and so it is imperialistic at the same time. But this is a kind of imperialism whose subjects, even if they don't like it at all, vitally depend upon it.

The second little-noticed consequence is that "cosmopolitan corporations" and maybe even a "cosmopolitan capitalism" are in the making. Global corporations are using and developing the productivity of diversity. The mixing of races, ethnic groups, and nationalities—at home and abroad—is becoming their central resource for creativity and at the same time their dominant employment policy. The antidote to stagnation is hybridization. Mélange is the norm, at least inside these corporations. It is exactly the meta-power of capital that sets companies free to diversify their workforces—often against national laws and agencies. Global corporations are transnational societies in miniature.

Talking about the possibility of the coming of a pacifist and cosmopolitan capitalism may sound worse than illusionary. Of course, old-fashioned territorial struggles continue in many parts of the world and may even gain new importance in the near future—as the plans of the Bush administration to build a new national missile defense system suggest. But in the central arenas of economic globalization, where transnational corporations and nation-states both compete and collaborate, war has become almost unthinkable; both military power and diplomacy have lost their longstanding importance. Of course, not all states are equally inclined or able to participate in the new global power game. Even among states there are different kinds of losers and winners.

The old territorial and the new deterritorialized power games overlap and contradict each other. We are talking about very ambivalent processes and open-ended scenarios. But, in fact, the old categories of state-centered power and politics are becoming zombie categories. They do not capture the new actors, strategies, resources, goals, conflicts, paradoxes, and ambivalent outcomes of economic meta-power, both inside and among nations.

2. The boundary between politics and economics is being broken up, strategically negotiated, redrawn, and redefined. To pick one example: the state monopoly of lawmaking is increasingly eroded by a kind of privatization. Legal changes are the order of the day in advanced capitalist societies as much as in former socialist ones and in the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Each society is reshaping its legal norms and institutions under the regime of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. New actors—corporate law firms, arbitration bodies, *lex mercatoria*, international institutions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—are contributing to the diversity of forms of regulation, to the variety of settings for rule creation, and to the proliferation of methods of interpretation and application of norms and standards. In fact, law is both privatized and transnationalized. It is instrumental in structuring processes of transnationalization just as it is being shaped through them. Property rights, patent law, environmental law, and human rights are the key areas in which the boundaries between national and transnational contexts are blurred or altogether lost.

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Transnational cooperative ventures and organizations thus become private quasi states. They make collectively binding decisions, but at the same time they mutate into fictitious decision makers, virtual organizations. Old enterprises were regulated by the principles of market and hierarchy; their power and their decisions were economically determined and limited, so that the burden of legitimation was removed. But nowadays corporations-as-quasi-states also have to make political decisions , and they are at the same time fundamentally dependent on negotiation and trust, and thus thoroughly dependent on legitimation. Furthermore, they become legitimation-dependent players without being able to draw on democratic sources of legitimation. As a result, there is a chronic need for trust on the part of global economic players, which makes world markets extremely unstable. An interesting paradox arises, which can be used by NGOs as they confront the high power and low legitimation of transnational corporations with their own low power and high legitimation. They may yet learn to exploit their legitimation power.

The quasi-statehood of transnational economic meta-power is evident not least in the fact that the new norms are conceived globally, and thus, so to speak, include nation-states as local executive organs. This is what Renato Ruggerio, the former general director of the World Trade Organization, was referring to when he said in 1997, "We are writing the constitution of a single global economy." This is the neoliberal project, which anticipates globally binding decisions. Accordingly, a universally valid and applicable policy mix is being propagated: political reforms are to be geared to the standard of economic goals—low inflation; balanced budgets; the dismantling of trade barriers and currency controls; maximum freedom for capital; minimum regulation of the national labor market; and a lean, adaptable welfare state that pushes its citizens into work. These are the reform goals of globally active neoliberalism. Economic power remains "non-political" because adjustment to the international economy—above all to the global finance markets—has become the internal compass of domestic politics.

We are not living at the "end of politics," but in a time of translegal meta-politics; the neoliberal regime embodies a global reform policy. It envisions a borderless world, not for labor but for capital. This is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy through the structural reform policies initiated by the IMF and World Bank. Neoliberal futures are contested on many grounds; I want, very briefly, to look at one of the less familiar criticisms: that the neoliberal regime is incapable of reproducing itself, an idea put forth by Jan Nederveen Pieterse.

There are well-grounded arguments for this claim. The major elements of instability are

- the series of financial crises in Asia, South America, and Russia;
- unemployment, fragile employment, and "jobless growth";
- inequality, poverty, and exclusion within and among countries, and the connection of all this to conflict, security risks, and then the withdrawal of investors;
- global environmental and technological risks;
- the downward trend of corporate taxes and the inability to finance common goods, nationally and globally;
- and finally, tensions between capitalism and political freedom, the market and democracy.

These are the challenges of what I call the "world risk society," and deregulation, liberalization, and privatization provide no remedy. In fact, for such hazards the neoliberal regime is counterproductive. Without taxation, no infrastructure. Without taxation, no proper education, no affordable health care. Without taxation, there is no public sphere. Without a public sphere, there is no legitimacy. Without legitimacy, there is no conflict management and no security. To close the circle: without forums for regulated (that is, recognized and nonviolent) handling of conflicts, both nationally and globally, there will be no economy whatsoever.

3. This is the central paradox of the neoliberal model of state and politics. On the one hand, it is oriented to the ideal image of the minimalist state, whose responsibilities and autonomy are to be tailored to the enforcement of global economic norms. The state, "adjusted to the global market," has to be easily replaceable and completely ex-

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changeable; it has to compete with the largest possible number of similar states; it is expected to have institutionally internalized the neoliberal regime. On the other hand, deregulating the market and privatizing public assets does not mean a weak state. What is in prospect is a stronger state, for example, in matters of surveillance and repression. It is a state that chips away at habeas corpus or trial by jury, increases prison sentences, steps up border patrols, and prepares for terrorism as the weapon of the weak. Legal rules adjusted to the global economy must in turn be sanctioned by the states and defended against social resistance. Above all, such a state must make certain that mobility of capital is not matched by any comparable mobility of labor.

Another key paradox is that globalization means reinventing borders, tightening border controls. These new borders do not function like the old ones. They look like Swiss cheese: they incorporate uncertainties because of flows of information, capital, people. Still, the state must have a defined territory over which it exercises real power, because it must be in a position to convince its own citizens to accept the transnational rules. Indeed, states must even be able to bestow post-hoc legitimation on decisions that will often have come about in a completely undemocratic manner and that effectively undermine the power of national politics. In order to attain the goal of neoliberal restructuring of the world, the power of the state has to be simultaneously minimized *and* maximized.

4. Governments, parties, and states find it difficult to exploit the above paradox in order to revitalize democratic politics. Corporations with the advantages of mobility and a global network are able to weaken individual states by playing them against one another. This extension of translegal rule works all the better the more the national perspective dominates the thinking and action of people and states. What might be called the methodological nationalism of daily life and politics (and scholarship too) strengthens the transnational power of big companies. National rivalries prevent national leaders from discovering the mighty potential of cooperation among states and from finding institutional forms for it. In other words, *the national fixation with politics is a self-defeating mechanism.*

At this point it is useful to introduce a distinction between *potential* power and *actual* power in order to examine the extent to which state strategies can counter capital strategies. The actual power of states is paralyzed by neoliberalism and nationalism. Potential state meta-power in turn is created by the break with these two, allowing the deterritorialized and denationalized states to open up new transnational potentials of politics and control. Political answers to the newly emergent global economic geography can be found by developing what I call the despatialization of state, politics, and identity. What does this mean? Governments are essentially acting in a transnational space as soon as they negotiate binding international legal agreements, or—as for example in the European Union—join together to create spaces of "shared, interactive, cooperative sovereignty." This strategy, however, has its price. Under the conditions of economic globalization, states find themselves in a nationality trap. If they stick to the sovereignty postulate of nation-state politics, they both intensify the competition for investment among states *and* increase the risk of monopoly-formation on the world market, which in turn weakens the state players. If, on the other hand, they reduce interstate competition by combining and imposing obligations on themselves in order to strengthen their position against the global economy, they qualify their own national sovereignty. The national narrowness of the state thus becomes a hindrance to transnational inventiveness.

The elements that used to be combined in the national paradigm—independence, self-determination, and the domestic resolution of central problems (welfare, justice, security)—now become separated and opposed. Governments have to surrender national independence, tie each others' hands, in essence, in cooperative agreements, in order to deal successfully with central *national* tasks.

5. In order to break free from the nationality trap both in thought and action, we will have to distinguish between *au-*

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tonomy and *sovereignty*. Methodological nationalism is based on the equation of these two, which means that economic dependence; cultural diversification; and military, legal, and technological cooperation among states automatically lead to a loss of both. However, if sovereignty is equated with the ability to solve political problems—that is, to create economic growth, prosperity, jobs, social security, and so on—then increasing transnational state cooperation, though it involves the loss of autonomy, constitutes a real gain in sovereignty. The ability of governments to exercise control increases with interstate cooperation, with the subsequent rise in living standards that then becomes possible, and with their new global economic strength. Sharing sovereignty increases sovereignty rather than reduces it. The benefits of sharing include security and stability, reduced military spending, and economic and technological cooperation. There is a national interest in denationalization, in sharing sovereignty in order to solve national problems.

This insight is central to a cosmopolitan social science: a reduction in national autonomy and a growth in national sovereignty are by no means exclusive. The process of globalization goes hand in hand with a shift from autonomy based on national exclusion to sovereignty based on transnational inclusion. The logic of the zero-sum game—as we know it from great power conflict, colonialism, economic and cultural imperialism, and military alliances—loses its explanatory power. The new politics begins with breaking the "national sound barrier."

6.

Given this new politics, how can the idea of the state be opened up to the challenges of transnationalization, the challenges of the "world risk society"? The same question can also be put another way: who is going to prevent the next holocaust?

My tentative answer is, possibly the *cosmopolitan state*, which would have to be founded on the principle of national indifference. Just as the Peace of Westphalia ended the religious civil wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by separating state and religion, so the national world wars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries could be answered by a separation of state and nation. Only the non-religious state makes the practice of different religions possible, and only the cosmopolitan state will be able to guarantee the co-existence of national identities. The curbing of nationalist theology should lead to a redefinition of the scope and frame of politics just as curbing Christian theology did at the beginning of modern times in Europe. In the mid-seventeenth century, a secular state was inconceivable, even synonymous with the end of the world, and today a non-national state is almost equally unthinkable; it breaks with the most basic political idea: the antagonism of friend and foe. And yet, there are two arguments that provide theoretical justification for this idea of cosmopolitan sovereignty: it would open the way for genuine diversity and it would establish fundamental human rights.

So what is the meaning of the old adjective "cosmopolitan," which has suddenly begun to glitter again? Cosmopolitanism is the new master concept for how to include globalization in politics, identity, and society. Nationalism is about exclusive distinctions and loyalties. Cosmopolitanism is about inclusive distinctions and loyalties (being citizens of two worlds—*cosmos* and *polis*). It is thus possible to have both wings and roots—to develop meaningful affiliations without renouncing one's origins. The adjective "national" presumes self-determination. The cosmopolitan question is, self-determination—but against whom? How are the victims of self-determination given their own chance at it? How can we co-exist, at the same time both equal and different? How can we avoid having to choose between two destructive alternatives: living together and giving up our differences or living apart in homogenous communities that communicate only through the market or through violence? Only the post-nation, plural-nation, nation-indifferent, and nation-tolerant state can possibly overcome these alternatives. The national Other must be present, recognized, given a voice in the community, culturally as well as politically.

To the ears of those speaking in national terms, this sounds like a completely unrealistic utopia, and yet many of its basic characteristics are already partly realized. Every coun-

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try that puts democracy and human rights above autocracy and nationalism is already on the way to the cosmopolitan state, which must not be confused with the idea of a centralized world state.

I now think of Europe as a new kind of transnational, cosmopolitan, quasi-state structure, which draws its political strength precisely from the affirmation and taming of the European diversity of nations. Europe as a cosmopolitan state that cooperatively domesticates economic globalization and guarantees the otherness of the others—this is a realistic utopia.

The idea of the cosmopolitan state may be defined against three positions: the dangerous illusion of national self-reliance, the neoliberal idea of the minimal, deregulated economic state, and the imperialistic model of the global state (in the premodern or postmodern era).

In reality, cosmopolitanism requires a struggle for a political Europe, which is more than a conglomerate of nation-states regularly at each others' throats. It requires the overcoming of ethnic nationalism, not by condemning it but by affirming it under the constitutional law of peaceful co-existence. It requires the renewal of the continental ethos of democracy, of the state of law, and of political freedom for the transnational era. Europe also needs to internalize the American dream, with its message that you, too, can become someone else, someone other than who you are now. You are not determined by country of origin, social status, skin color, nation, religion, or gender.

A cosmopolitan Europe of national difference—what does that mean with regard, for example, to Great Britain? In British Euroskepticism, I believe, it is not the insistence on their own national culture that deserves criticism, but rather their inability to recognize that a cosmopolitan Europe would not cancel it out but would, rather, cherish it. Europe would not be Europe without the British idea of civilization. The most important historical event of the twentieth century, the defeat of National Socialist terror, would have been inconceivable without the British determination to defend European values in Europe against the Germans in their fascist fervor. This determination was a product of British history, a feature of British cosmopolitanism, and it produced one of the founding acts of the new Europe. Similarly, it is necessary to discover cosmopolitan France, cosmopolitan Germany, cosmopolitan Italy, Poland, Spain, Greece, Russia, and so on.

7. Is the idea of the cosmopolitan state transferable to other regions of the world? This possibility emerges clearly when we compare the political architecture of cosmopolitan states with national federalism. Both prescribe and establish a highly differentiated, balanced power structure—in the case of federalism, within a nation-state; in the case of transnationalism, between different states. With this in mind, it is possible to conceive of hybrid forms of transnational or cosmopolitan architecture for a federation of states and a construction process that could gradually, step by step, suspend the seemingly unbreakable unity of nation and state, without creating a power vacuum.

The new state option of a cosmopolitan, interactive, and reflexive state, which seeks to reconstitute its power at the intersection of global, regional, and local systems of governance, is emerging wherever previously there was only the alternative of *either* national self-determination *or* submission to the authority of someone else's nation-state. The architecture of a cosmopolitan federal state could point a way out of the politics of false alternatives, in particular in regions of chronic ethnic-national state conflicts—the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians comes to mind—or in the face of annexation (Hong Kong) or the threat of annexation (Taiwan). In the Middle East, this would assume that Israel re-imports its own cosmopolitan tradition, the diasporic consciousness.

8. The enemies of cosmopolitanism are easy to identify and apparently all-powerful, but who would qualify as the agent of cosmopolitan transformation? Modern nationalism was born out of emergent national capitalism. Could modern cosmopolitanism emerge as a creation of global capitalism? Or is it the opposite, that global capitalism destroys the preconditions and sources of cultural diversity and political freedom?

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Could capitalism become a factor in the cosmopolitan revival of democracy? I know, this would put the socialist perspective of the Workers' International upside down. Still, might it be possible to develop the sub-politics of investment decisions into an instrument of power with two goals: to establish global rules for "wild" capitalism and to force nation-states to open up to cosmopolitanism? Or does such an idea merely raise false hopes and false consciousness once again?

THERE IS nothing more risky than making a prediction about the future. Whoever focuses, however, on the increasing power of the global economy can derive—experimentally—a short-term and a long-term prognosis. In the short term, protectionist forces may triumph, a heterogeneous mix of nationalists, anticapitalists, environmentalists, defenders of national democracy as well as xenophobic groupings and religious fundamentalists. In the long term, however, an even more paradoxical coalition between the supposed "losers" from globalization (trade unions, environmentalists, democrats) and the "winners" (big business, financial markets, world trade organizations, the World Bank) may indeed lead to a renewal of the political—provided that both sides recognize that their specific interests are best served by cosmopolitan rules. Then, advocates of workers' rights, environmentalists, and defenders of democracy will support cosmopolitan legal systems. But so will globally active businesses for, at the end of the day, they can only be successful in a framework that guarantees themselves and others legal, political, and social security.

Ignoring the fact that the globalization of the market is turning the world into a battlefield for the survival of the fittest is not only unacceptable to the forces that oppose the neoliberal agenda; it is also dangerous for capital itself. This raises the question of whether there is a chance that both groups—the opponents of neoliberalism and the cosmopolitan faction of capital—will find the cosmopolitan state a useful instrument in a second *Great Transformation* (like that of Karl Polanyi), where the complex processes of globalization undermine the capacity of nation-states to act effectively. Perhaps the cosmopolitan state could become the leading political answer to the paradox that in the era of globalization and pluralism we find ourselves caught in the maelstrom of conflicts over political identities and ethnic fragmentation.

In order to determine the possibilities of such a cosmopolitical regime, three questions have to be answered systematically: Who are the losers—that is, the probable enemies—of the pluralization of borders inside national societies and between societies and states in the international system? How do cosmopolitical coalitions nationally and internationally—for example, between global civil society (NGOs) and transnational corporations, transnational corporations and post-national states, post-national states and global civil society actors—become possible and powerful? And how can correspondingly powerful anti-cosmopolitical coalitions be overcome? Finally, what has to be recognized of the dark side, the unexpected consequences of the victory of the cosmopolitical transformation (for example, the "military humanism" of the Kosovo war in 1999)?

Still, the only way to make this cosmopolitical vision possible, as Immanuel Kant taught almost two hundred years ago, is to act steadily "as if" it were possible. Let me close with an ironic quote from George Bernard Shaw: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man." ●

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Ending Welfare, Continuing Poverty

Amy D. Burke

Ever since President Bill Clinton signed the welfare reform act in August 1996, many women have moved off welfare—but not out of poverty. Despite what was until recently a very strong economy, most former recipients, including those who work, are struggling to get by. Getting people into just any job doesn't make them self-sufficient. Instead, it often locks them into low-wage employment without benefits or advancement. More than thirty-four million Americans—many of whom work—remain in poverty. And yet many liberals and conservatives sing the praises of welfare reform simply because women who were once on welfare no longer are.

In addition to replacing Aid to Families with Dependent Children with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 altered many programs designed to assist poor children and families, including child support and child care programs, disability benefits, immigrant eligibility for benefits, and the Food Stamp Program. Many of these changes are coming up for congressional reauthorization in 2002, increasing the need for policymakers, academics, and citizens to press Congress to show us the compassion George W. Bush talked about during the election.

Rather than focus on poverty rates and the support low-income adults and children desperately need, debates about welfare reform typically revolve around a discussion of work: What is the proper relation between public assistance and employment? How much should those in need be required to work? And how long should assistance be available to those seemingly unable or unwilling to stay employed? TANF codifies the twin ideas that public assistance should be limited in nature and that those in need should be required to work, regardless of their particular life circumstances and the vicissitudes of the economy. As a result, the new system is really a *work* rather than a *welfare* program, but it is a work program sorely in need of improvement.

The new program fails to deliver on the promise that we as a nation "put work first." Instead, TANF makes it increasingly difficult for individuals to receive the education they need to find and hold decent jobs, and it fails to help the many working Americans who remain impoverished. Rather than bolstering the life chances of those in need, the system now places the poorest among us in an even more vulnerable position. This will become increasingly obvious as the economy continues to falter and more and more people find themselves laid off, ineligible for unemployment compensation, and unable to find new jobs.

Welfare Leavers

Even before Bill Clinton ended welfare as we knew it, caseloads had begun to fall. The growing economy coupled with Earned Income Tax Credit expansions in the early 1990s greatly increased the number of single mothers in the workforce. By late 1996, TANF policy changes began pushing many more off the rolls, either into jobs or simply out of the system because of rules infractions or paperwork errors. Between August 1996 and June 1999, caseloads nationwide fell about 44 percent, although they did not diminish evenly across the nation. As Bruce Katz and Katherine Allen of the Brookings Institution point out, welfare rolls declined more slowly in cities. Currently, about 60 percent of all TANF recipients live in eighty-nine urban counties.

Although many former recipients have held

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on to jobs and the rolls have continued to drop, a number of indicators suggest that, overall, poor families are doing worse, not better. While the poverty rate declined to a twenty-year low in 1999, not all groups benefited equally. Poverty declined among Hispanics and African-Americans, but one in three female-headed families lives below the poverty line, as does one in four of all Latino and African-American families, according to the Center for Policy Alternatives. Overall, the poverty rate for all children dropped to a twenty-year low of 16.9 percent, but this figure doesn't tell the whole story. The poverty rate for children under six who live in households headed by a female is a staggering 50.3 percent. This contrasts to 9 percent for children under six who live in married-couple families. Moreover, fewer poor children receive assistance now than in the past. In 1998, 43 percent of poor children received TANF money, whereas 62 percent received AFDC in 1994. In addition, despite overall income growth, the average income of the poorest fifth of the population didn't increase at all between 1989 and 1999.

Nonetheless, many former recipients have found jobs. A recent Johns Hopkins University study of welfare leavers in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio found that 63 percent of women who have left TANF in those three cities found jobs. These numbers are consistent with the employment rate of 50 percent to 70 percent for welfare leavers identified by studies in different states. The Johns Hopkins study also found that employed former recipients typically earn less than they received while on welfare.

Of those welfare leavers interviewed, 65 percent said they left because they found a job, 14 percent said they left because they had been sanctioned, and 6 percent reported that they had reached a program time limit. The remaining portion reported that they had left for other reasons, including that another member of the household became employed and having child-support money. Those who found work earn an average hourly wage of $7.50, 60 percent work full time rather than part time, and only 36 percent of those with jobs received health insurance. Researchers found that about 74 percent of those who have left welfare live in poverty—this number would be even higher without the additional earnings of others in the household and without such government programs as Medicaid and subsidized housing.

To gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the employment rates of women who have left TANF, the researchers looked closely at the impact of education and health status on employment and income. Not surprisingly, more education and better health translated into higher earnings and increased rates of employment among those interviewed for the study: welfare leavers with a high school degree or high school equivalency (GED) were employed 78 percent of the time in the year preceding their interview, as compared to 61 percent for women without a high school degree or GED, and welfare leavers in very good or excellent health were employed 83 percent of the previous year, as compared with 60 percent for women in poor or fair health.

Health and education levels had a large impact on women's employment history. Earnings of those with less education are about half of those with more education, and earnings of those in poor or fair health are about half of those in very good to excellent health.

Health status is the most striking: 31 percent of welfare leavers in poor to fair health were not working in the year prior to the interview, compared to only 6 percent of women in very good to excellent health.

In the year preceding their interview for the study, about 28 percent of women with less education hadn't worked at all, while only 13 percent of those with more education hadn't found work. According to the study, 91 percent of welfare leavers without a high school diploma or GED lived in poverty compared to 64 percent of those with a high school degree.

The Effect of Sanctions

Sanctions remain a controversial component of TANF. Some argue that sanctions enable states to enforce compliance with work requirements, but there is growing evidence that sanctioned women—and their children—are often the most vulnerable, meaning that they need more, not less, assistance to make the transition to self-sufficiency. Under the new welfare system, states can sanction women who receive

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TANF for a variety of reasons, including missing a meeting with a caseworker and failing to follow certain administrative rules. Women who left the rolls because they had been sanctioned fared worse than those who had not been sanctioned. On average, fewer sanctioned women found jobs (57 percent versus 76 percent for those who hadn't been sanctioned) in the year before their interview for the study. In addition, 89 percent of those who had been sanctioned remained poor after leaving TANF, compared to 71 percent of those who hadn't been sanctioned. Sanctioned leavers also earned less per month—$327 compared to $558. As a recent Children's Defense Fund (CDF) study put it, "Families who were 'pushed off' the welfare rolls for non-compliance with the new rules were more likely to be burdened by educational deficiencies and health problems than current recipients." Lack of education, experience, and job skills hamper their efforts to find and keep jobs.

Women who had previously been most dependent on welfare (the so-called "welfare queens" who received benefits for long periods of time) have a harder time getting and keeping jobs. TANF seems unable—and not seriously intended—to help those women make the transition into the workforce. As the Johns Hopkins study points out, "Only one-half (48 percent) of conventional leavers are dependency leavers—that is, only one-half of 'leavers'. . .actually moved from welfare dependency to relative independence from welfare."

Studies have also confirmed what anecdotal evidence has suggested for several years—that demand for emergency food and shelter has increased markedly since welfare reform. According to a 1999 U.S. Conference of Mayors survey of twenty-six large cities, the need for emergency shelter rose 12 percent and the need for food at pantries rose 18 percent between 1998 and 1999. Cuts in the Food Stamp Program also make able-bodied, childless adults eligible for food stamps for only three months out of every three years. Recent studies looking at Illinois and the Phoenix, Arizona, area, sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, reported that one of every three such individuals has experienced moderate to severe hunger. Many former recipients no longer receive Medicaid and food stamps, although they remain eligible. In fact, the most significant portion of those leaving the Food Stamp Program are families with children, according to a recent DOA study. The reasons for these declines remain somewhat unclear. An Urban Institute report on the Food Stamp Program caseload decline found that 72 percent of welfare leavers said they no longer receive food stamps because of increased earnings—even when they may remain eligible. What the researchers could not determine is whether families left the Food Stamp Program because they thought they had become ineligible or whether they were told they were ineligible. Administrative hassles, according to the study, account for another portion of those who no longer receive food stamps.

Not surprisingly, studies find that former recipients struggle with the same issues as most working Americans: how to afford child care, how to pay for their children's health needs if they don't qualify for Medicaid, and transportation to work. Lack of child care ranks high on the list of reasons many recipients give for not finding or keeping jobs, and yet few states provide adequate, affordable child care. The CDF study found that less than a third of working former recipients received help paying for child care, only half of working families with very low incomes received food stamps, and almost a third of such families include a member without health insurance—and this under the best possible economic conditions.

What often gets lost as Democrats and Republicans talk up welfare reform is that those who have been placed in the most vulnerable position by this new system are children, who often live in substandard housing, in impoverished neighborhoods, and attend underfunded schools unaffected by vouchers, choice, and empowerment zones. And the new system provides no escape routes for these children. It does, however, remove the one safety net—inadequate though it was—that the nation had provided for them since 1935.

Studies indicate that many children of mothers who have received welfare have a chronic illness. According to research summa-

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rized in a recent update published by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), "Forty-one percent of mothers who have been on welfare for more than two years in the past and 32 percent of mothers who have been on welfare for two years or less have at least one child with a chronic condition whose health and developmental needs they must address, compared with 21 percent of mothers who have never been on welfare." Only about 12 percent of families with eligible children receive a child care subsidy, according to the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support but President Bush's budget proposed cutting the Child Care Development Block Grant by $200 million.

CDF—whose mission is to speak on behalf of these children and their families— provides a vivid snapshot of life for so many young Americans in the world of "welfare-to-work." Of the 965 children of former welfare recipients in the CDF study:

- 366 children lived in families that could not pay the rent,
- 320 children lived in families that could not buy food,
- 216 children had to change their school as a result of changing homes,
- 205 children lived in families that could not pay for the child's health care,
- 202 children lived in families that were evicted from their home,
- 178 children lived in families whose phone had been cut off, and
- 103 children lived in families whose electricity had been disconnected.

Families doing the best under the current system have benefited from a good economy and often receive additional government support. Simply having a caseworker who provides information about health care services and child care assistance greatly increases the odds that individuals get such assistance, but one in four former recipients told CDF that their caseworker had not given them help with medical coverage, and two in five said their caseworker had not provided information about child care. Many families of former recipients lack much-needed services because their income levels are just past the regulated cutoff or because they don't know what's available. And then there are the hardest to help: those with serious obstacles to work, either because they are too ill or because they lack the education, skills, and training needed to get and keep a job in our high-skilled, competitive economy.

All Jobs Are Not Created Equal

Ending welfare and putting work first does not occur in a void, although much political rhetoric would have us believe it does. As Robert Kennedy pointed out many years ago, a real antipoverty strategy requires meaningful community economic development, education and training, and family support. We know that all jobs are not created equal. When non-poor people consider job options for themselves, they weigh which combination of salary and benefits will best enable them to take care of themselves and their families. And yet many political officials act as if poor people don't have these same considerations and are better off working regardless of pay or whether they can afford child care or transportation, and of whether the job provides benefits such as health insurance or paid sick leave.

Forcing individuals into the only jobs they can find does not strengthen families, foster economic mobility, or protect children. In other words, work doesn't actually come first. Education and training are necessary first steps if we are truly serious about moving people off welfare and into good jobs. This is more true now than ever, as our increasingly global, technology-driven economy requires more advanced skills than the old industrial economy. Access to postsecondary education and training is key to helping former recipients and other low-income individuals make their way in the new economy. Acres of trees have been cut down to provide paper for the countless studies that confirm this point. Adding to this research, the CDF study found that only women with at least a vocational or two-year postsecondary degree were likely to lift themselves and their children out of poverty after leaving welfare.

Not surprisingly, the new welfare system makes it more difficult for states to count participation in postsecondary programs as work. Even before TANF went into effect, accord-

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ing to CLASP, the "work first" ethos that has swept the nation led states to shift their emphasis from training to rapid employment. A 1999 U.S. Department of Education analysis found that welfare-to-work participation in such programs declined significantly in the seven states it examined.

Although instituting a more punitive policy at the national level—the five-year lifetime assistance limit and the requirement that individuals be engaged in work-related activity within two years—TANF does gives states considerable flexibility. As a result, some of these "laboratories of innovation" have chosen to be more generous while others have gone in the other direction, requiring individuals to work after only thirty days and instituting a two-year lifetime benefit limit.

The new law got rid of the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program, which—as a supplement to AFDC—allowed a number of welfare recipients to enroll in job training programs as well as in two- and four-year degree programs while still receiving public assistance. Now, according to the Education Commission of the States, "allowable postsecondary coursework for recipients is limited to 12 months of vocational education." On top of that, federal policy requires states to demonstrate that increasing numbers of welfare recipients work—25 percent by 1997 and 50 percent by 2002. However, only 30 percent of those classified as working in each state can count vocational education "toward the work activity quota."

There is some leeway. States could enroll more TANF recipients in postsecondary programs for longer periods of time. According to the State Policy Documentation Project of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, twenty-two states permit recipients to enroll in postsecondary programs for longer than the twelve months allowed by federal law. Some states also have money to spend on education and training. Federal TANF funds can be used for a variety of purposes, including postsecondary programs, child care, transportation, and other necessary support services. Moreover, federal welfare-to-work grants and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 have given a boost to community colleges that have programs for TANF recipients and leavers. However, the programs need to focus more on the specific needs of low-income individuals, especially single parents. With the caseload drop, states currently have a surplus of TANF dollars that they must spend or risk losing once Congress reauthorizes the program next year. According to the Center for Policy Alternatives, states had eight billion dollars in TANF funds that they had not yet spent or earmarked for spending as of one year ago.

Besides having the money and authority to provide much-needed help to people moving from welfare to work, states also have public support to do so. According to a survey conducted last year for Jobs for the Future, 77 percent of Americans "feel the government should help people moving from welfare to work to get training and find jobs that offer opportunities for advancement so that they increase their chances of building careers and remaining self-sufficient." Despite the hoopla about getting people off welfare, only 19 percent supported moving people into the first job available, irrespective of advancement. And 90 percent of respondents believed that government should help pay for education and training for those leaving welfare. In addition, 94 percent agree that "as a country, we should make sure that people who work full time should be able to earn enough to keep their families out of poverty."

Why We Put Work First

Work has a special place in the American mind. We are reared to understand ourselves as rugged individuals, whose parents and grandparents worked hard to get ahead and provide something better for their progeny. This ingrained individualism, coupled with our system of federalism and long-standing fears about concentrated authority, have guided the development of American politics, keeping the central government small, especially when compared to our European counterparts. This helps explain, at least in part, how the AFDC program—which constituted no more than 1 percent of the national budget annually from its inception in 1935 to its demise in 1996—came to be painted by conservatives as government largesse gone astray.

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Schoolchildren are taught these ideas through Horatio Alger-like, rags-to-riches stories in which individuals overcome great odds to achieve the American dream. Never mind that this history lesson leaves many pages unturned—most Americans believe that work provides the basic structure around which successful lives are built. The tenacious grip of work on the American mind makes it difficult for welfare advocates—even in times of economic crisis—to build a case for government assistance; large numbers of Americans believe that any such provision must be earned. During the Great Depression, when a third of Americans had lost their livelihoods through no fault of their own, most recipients of assistance felt demeaned by their situation.

TANF highlights both the emphasis on work in American political culture and the limited nature of the American commitment to providing jobs for those in need. We want people to work, but we don't want to guarantee them a job. What the country needs now is a paradigm shift toward a new understanding of self-sufficiency. People who can work must be given access to education and training and then must be guaranteed a job, along with the support they need to keep it. When the economy slows, community service jobs should be provided as part of a broader antipoverty policy. Declining poverty rather than falling welfare caseloads should be our measure of success. Franklin Delano Roosevelt failed to make permanent our nation's boldest experiment with a public jobs program—the Works Progress Administration. It may be time for those who envision a comprehensive antpoverty system to revisit it. As FDR knew, people aren't truly free when they are captive to the vicissitudes of the market. Among the essential elements of a "healthy and strong democracy," he told the American people on January 6, 1941, are "jobs for those who can work and security for those who need it." ●

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Sources for this article include the following:

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The Politics of Software

The Case of Open Source

Manuel DeLanda

As the *United States v. Microsoft* antitrust case drew to a close last year, the tone of Judge Thomas P. Jackson's findings of fact left little doubt in most observers' minds that the software corporation would be found guilty as charged. The most recent court ruling (June 2001) seems to indicate that the new Republican administration will let the giant corporation off the hook. But Microsoft still faces another challenge to its monopoly, a challenge that may prove more difficult to tackle than the American courts. An internal memorandum written by a Microsoft employee defined the new threat and was leaked via the Internet as the case was reaching its climax. A movement of hackers is attempting to create a new paradigm of software production: collectively created programs in which consumers are also (to different degrees) producers.

This hacker movement, known variously as "Free Software" or "Open Source," burst into public consciousness a few years ago as a result of its success in the production of reliable and robust software. Some of its products (the server software called Apache) have already acquired a larger market share than Microsoft's, and the share of some others (the operating system known as Linux) is growing at a faster rate than the corporation's product. In either case, the success of the movement has gone beyond the expectations of most analysts and has taken most corporate managers by surprise; many of them (at corporations like IBM and SUN) are switching from proprietary to "open" systems.

Although Open Source software is typically free, or sold at relatively low prices, its impact is only indirectly related to monetary questions; it is more intimately linked to the kind of software it makes available. Rather than producing end-user application software (word processors, browsers, spreadsheets, and so on) the members of this movement, who number in the hundreds if not thousands, have concentrated their efforts on the very tools needed to create those applications—what we may refer to without much exaggeration as the means of production of the "information economy" (compilers, debuggers, program text-editors, and so on). In addition, they have created several operating systems, that is, the software platforms on top of which both applications and the tools to produce them run. The crucial importance of the operating system may be grasped from the fact that the Justice Department investigated Microsoft not so much because of its large size or dominant market share, but because it produces both an operating system (Windows) and a series of applications. Controlling both the platform on which programs run as well as what runs on top of this platform gives Microsoft an unfair advantage over competitors. It may, if it wants, delay the release of technical details on a new operating system, forcing its rivals to wait to rewrite applications while Microsoft takes as much time as it wants.

Challenging Microsoft's dominant operating system with a rival product is not, however, what characterizes the Open Source movement, but rather the specific way in which this challenge is mounted. There are two main forms in which a computer program may exist. When a user buys a particular application from a commercial vendor—a word processor, for example—the program typically has a form that is next to unintelligible to human beings (but perfect for a computer). It consists of long series of ones and zeros that code for specific machine instructions. When that same program is being developed, on the other hand,

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machine language is not used as frequently as some other high-level language that is not only readable by humans but is also accompanied by comments that explain (to other humans) what each part of the program is intended to do. This human-oriented version, referred to by the term "source code," is used to change or further develop a particular program. Whereas Microsoft would never allow the source code of its products to be freely distributed, given that this is its main form of intellectual property, within the Open Source movement a program is distributed exclusively in this form. So it is open to further improvement and development by its users. In short, the movement has defined an alternative conception of how software should be produced, an alternative paradigm that is at once evolutionary and collective.

The freedom to change and adapt a given piece of software allows the formation of development communities within which many of the inevitable errors (or "bugs") that are part and parcel of any complex program can be discovered and fixed. This community-based debugging results in software that is more resilient against malfunction than commercially available programs. The downside is the inevitable presence of free-raiders: what can stop a particular user (an individual or an institution) from benefiting from this shared source code, altering it a bit, then closing it, and selling it as proprietary software? The Open Source solution to this dilemma is ingenious. It consists of a license agreement known as GPL (GNU Public License) with terms designed to force anyone who uses previously Open Source code to open whatever contributions he or she makes.

It is important to emphasize that this effect is not achieved by abolishing intellectual property—each contributor in fact owns the copyright of whatever piece of code he or she has developed—but by altering the way in which the rights of exclusion that are part and parcel of property rights are deployed. This is the originality of the GPL: rather than actively exploiting the right to exclude, it holds the right in reserve as a threat to potential free-raiders. In addition, the license has become a legal instrument for community-building in two different ways. By enforcing the norm of "sharing code," it preserves and propagates the values of a once small community, allowing it to grow in proportion to the degree to which the software propagates. It also serves as a means to allocate credit for particular contributions: the license requires that the names of the creators of specific innovations not be removed from any future release, thereby preserving the motivation that replaces monetary incentives in what is, in effect, an "economy of reputation."

THE CLEVER design of the GPL bears witness to what we may call the institutional creativity of some Open Source hackers—an example of their creative achievements beyond the writing of code. Another display of institutional creativity is the kind of governance structures that some of the hackers have devised for the collective production of software. To an outside observer, the idea of hundreds of people scattered around the world working incrementally and improving a program may seem like anarchy, but the actual development of specific projects is anything but anarchic. Each project has a leader (or committee of leaders) who has the final say on what improvements get included in the "official" version of the program.

The unquestioned authority of project leaders is sometimes expressed by saying that they are "benevolent dictators," but a more appropriate description of their role is that of creators and maintainers of the community supporting a particular project. The leaders must keep all potential developers motivated by immediately releasing any new piece of code so that interested users can get to work on it. They must learn to delegate responsibility for specific areas to certain users (in effect, making them co-developers); to promote cooperation; and to be as self-effacing as possible so as to block any suspicion that credit for the work will not be shared equally or that decisions about the quality of a given piece of code will not be made objectively. Although each of the different Open Source projects has a different governance structure (a single leader surrounded by an inner circle, committees with rotating memberships, and so on) the hackers involved have been enormously creative in solving the

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problems of coordinating a highly decentralized workforce and in leveraging the considerable potential of the Internet to lower coordination costs.

Let's assume for a moment that the combination of the GPL contract and an open, meritocratic governance structure—as well as the programming skills of the hundreds of people that this combination can harness—does indeed represent a novel approach to the production of software. We will still want to know if this new approach can challenge the corporate approach, and in which areas of software production this challenge can most successfully be mounted. Although the Open Source movement has excelled in the areas of production tools and operating systems, its record in the areas of end-user applications and user interfaces is not as impressive. Doubts remain as to its viability in the development of new software products, as opposed the improvement of existing ones. But even if we granted these drawbacks, its limited success would remain politically important, given the centrality of operating systems in the day-to-day running of an information economy.

But it can also be argued that the explosive growth of the Internet was made possible to a large extent by the lack of corporate ownership of its infrastructural software and by its common standards. Much of the software underlying the Internet's early growth was intellectual property that skilled programmers from around the world gave for free to the Internet community. IRC, the first program that allowed real-time chat, began as an experiment by a programmer in Finland, then was distributed free on the Internet. The software that formed the basis for the first virtual worlds, the Multi-User Dungeons, developed at an English university, also acquired its full potential by being unleashed without charge in the Internet. The same is true for the software at the base of news groups, such as Usenet, as well as the software that links together the humblest part of the Internet, the thousands of electronic bulletin board systems connected in networks like Fido. More recently, the very language of the World Wide Web (HTML); the software used to manage the names of domains like .com or .org (BIND); the most ubiquitous e-mail management software (SENDMAIL); and a variety of languages used in commercial Web sites (PERL) are all open standards created outside corporations and owned by no one.

Although all the software just mentioned is hardly visible to casual computer users, it is nevertheless crucial to the working of the Internet as we know it. It is this centrality that makes it politically important. Is there in addition to this political dimension a specifically moral dimension? A subgroup of this movement (going by the name of "Free Software") believes that there is. More specifically, it believes that the moral legitimacy of intellectual property rights is at stake here.

The economics textbook definition of the moral problem is well known: one begins by distinguishing goods that can be consumed only by a given person (or persons)—that is, goods whose very consumption excludes others from consuming them—and goods that do not possess this property. Food is an example of the first type, a good that is "rivalrous in consumption," while ideas are an example of the second type: if someone consumes a song or a book, this act by itself does not exclude others from consuming the same song or book, particularly if technologies of duplication and distribution have made the costs of reproduction minimal. The economic problem of intellectual property is that when goods that are not rivalrous in consumption are made subject to property rights, the exclusion aspect of these rights generates social waste. Given that additional copies of a given good may be generated and distributed at virtually no cost (this is particularly true of goods in digital form), excluding people from using them means that wants will go unsatisfied that could easily have been satisfied. On the other hand, not making these goods subject to property rights means that those producing them will have no incentive to do so, particularly if the costs of production are high. Thus the problem of intellectual property needs to be solved by a careful balancing of social costs and producer benefits, a balance that is best achieved case by case.

Given that exclusion seems to be the source of the moral problem, it may be argued

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that the GPL, with its creative use of exclusion, constitutes a solution to it. Yet this is not how its creator, Richard Stallman, views the question. He acknowledges the traditional way of posing the problem but adds that in addition to the material social waste there is a "psychosocial damage" associated with intellectual property, an erosion of the community value of helping one's neighbor. The position taken by his Free Software Foundation is that intellectual property is literally evil, and that the GPL is justified as a necessary lesser evil: if copyrights, patents, and so on disappeared altogether, it would gladly get rid of the GPL. The fact that the creators of this remarkable piece of legal machinery do not have a clear idea of its function leads me to think that the success of the hacker movement is largely a matter of "unintended consequences." This impression is further enhanced by the fact that the governance structures of many Open Source projects (such as the one for the operating system Linux) seem also to have evolved without any planning at all.

Perhaps we should not look for the abstract principles (such as Stallman's "freedom") that justify Open Source; perhaps we should not be in a hurry to issue programmatic statements about the morality of intellectual property in general. Better to learn the lessons of unintended consequences. Institutional reality is much too complex to be dealt with in any other terms than learning by doing. The hackers of this movement have exhibited great institutional creativity in the design of contracts and governance structures, but their contributions have not been around long enough to be more than experiments. The role of philosophy here is to be as experimental as these contributions have been, viewing the movement as a long-term process in the course of which its own moral foundations will be built, one piece at a time. We move to each successive experiment only after learning the unintended consequences of the previous one. ●

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Thinking About the Antisweatshop Movement

A Proposal for Modesty

Jeffrey C. Isaac

In the past two years an antisweatshop movement spearheaded by students has swept across U.S. campuses. Student groups, most of them affiliated with a national organization called United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), have called attention to sweatshop labor abuses at factories producing sports apparel with university-licensed logos—a multimillion dollar industry for universities—and have demanded that universities seek an end to such abuses. They have asked that universities require contractors to disclose the locations of all of their subcontracted factories; adopt codes of conduct requiring that contractors agree to produce only in factories where sweatshop labor abuses have been remedied and where workers are free to organize; and affiliate with the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), a group established in 2000 to assure monitoring of factories by independent, on-site grassroots worker groups and their international nongovernmental organization supporters.

This latter demand has proved the most controversial, for it involves a repudiation of an alternative group, the Fair Labor Association (FLA), whose formation was brokered by the Clinton administration and its Apparel Industry Partnership, and whose board includes the very corporations whose factories it is supposed to monitor. The FLA's premise is that corporations, labor and human rights supporters, and universities can collaborate constructively. It is governed by a board of directors that consists of six industry representatives, six representatives of labor and environmental groups, and a single representative of the more than one hundred affiliated universities (plus one executive director). The board works on the basis of a qualified majority rule principle that gives effective veto power to the industry representatives.

The FLA is thus at odds with the central premise of the student-supported WRC—the idea that corporations and their subcontractors cannot be trusted and that independent monitoring is essential to the achievement of labor rights. For this reason, the FLA is anathema to USAS, a hostility that is reciprocated by the FLA and especially by its corporate affiliates, who have disparaged USAS and the WRC as "ideological" and "unprofessional." In spite of this ideological antagonism, the FLA can be seen in part as an effort to co-opt the pressure that USAS, along with other antisweatshop campaigners, has successfully generated on campuses and in the broader society.

The students' greatest success has been their ability to press many major universities to affiliate with the WRC, thereby committing to the principle of independent monitoring and agreeing to provide financial and moral support to sweatshop workers and to labor and human rights groups that support them. The WRC is a unique organization, a consortium consisting of three distinct and autonomous constituent groups—USAS students, universities (principally university administrations), and an advisory council consisting of human rights and labor NGOs and unions. The WRC governing board consists of fifteen members—five representatives of USAS; five representatives of the University Constituency, which is organized as a university caucus; and five representatives of the NGOs. The governing board works according to majority rule. If the first constituent group provides the moral and political energy and the second provides the economic "weight" and substantial funding, the latter group provides the labor expertise and the ties to local workers that make the report-

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ing of abuses and their subsequent independent monitoring possible. The WRC, then, is a monitoring group *and* a direct link to sweatshop workers and union activists. In both respects it aims to empower workers.

The success of USAS—typically working along with supportive faculty and other allies—in getting universities to support such an organization has been nothing short of extraordinary. This effort, undertaken primarily during the 1999-2000 academic year, involved an ingenious combination of tactics, from direct action campaigns and sit-ins at major universities such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison, to teach-ins and public relations campaigns, to savvy negotiation with university administrations. The overall result of these efforts is a national campaign with significant momentum.

ALTHOUGH I am not a labor activist, over the past eighteen months I have been actively involved in the campus antisweatshop issue. I drafted a widely circulated faculty petition at Indiana University-Bloomington—signed by more than a hundred faculty within two weeks—supporting IU's negotiation with No Sweat! (the IU USAS group), a negotiation that led to IU's decision to affiliate with the WRC. (This decision played an important role in the subsequent decisions of the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin-Madison to affiliate with the WRC.) I have served as an IU representative to the founding conference of the WRC in New York and to the University Caucus meetings in Chicago, and I am an active member of the IU Sweatshop Advisory Committee. I have thus spent much time and intellectual energy thinking about the sweatshop issue and its significance.

Much of the literature on the antisweatshop movement falls into two fairly predictable genres—activist celebration and conservative or neoliberal disparagement. Student idealism is either lauded for its passion for justice or disparaged for its naïveté. But in neither case is the real political significance of the movement soberly considered. What I hope to offer below is precisely this—a serious consideration of the movement's significance and limitations. My basic point is that although the antisweatshop movement responds to some of the problems thrown up by globalization, it is a mistake to view it as a global challenge to corporate capitalism or an incipient form of radical political transformation. The campus antisweatshop movement is a partial, limited, and fairly modest effort, capable of producing only partial, limited, and fairly modest results. But this is no reason to disparage it, as there is little reason to believe that anything more grandiose is currently possible. And the results it can and does achieve are eminently good ones.

The Movement as It Is

1. To begin with, the antisweatshop movement is an exemplary sign of both student idealism and a resurgent idealism within the activist leadership of the American labor movement. The movement has affinities and overlaps with a range of cross-border labor solidarity efforts—from Press for Change and Global Exchange to the Campaign for Labor Rights and the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras—that have been spearheaded by citizens, clergy, and union leaders. And USAS activism is clearly at least in part the fruit of the AFL-CIO's Union Summer Program and other union efforts to reach out to college students. As a spark of idealism fanned by politically sophisticated union leaders, the student movement is a very promising development.

2. The antisweatshop movement is a response to new forms of globalization based upon the hypermobility of capital and the development of ever more integrated global consumer and financial markets. The movement dovetails with living wage campaigns, community-labor alliances, and other forms of resistance to unrestrained capitalist globalization that have emerged in the past few years. USAS activists have been active in anticorporate globalization protests in Seattle, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. In an article in the *Nation*, Liza Featherstone explicitly drew this connection, arguing that this student movement represents a challenge to the "corporatization" of the university.

3. The campus antisweatshop movement *does* challenge the effects of capitalist globalization and the corporatization of the

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university. It is motivated by two moral principles. The first is that the wholesale commodification of labor is a moral evil that ought to be opposed by all conscientious individuals. The second is solidarity with those who labor under sweatshop conditions. These principles challenge corporations and the sweatshops with which they subcontract as well as the growing ascendancy of market values within society and the university itself.

But it is an unusual kind of challenge. For the movement—and the Worker Rights Consortium that has been its principal achievement—is based, it seems to me, on the following distinct nonrevolutionary premises: (a) our society is saturated with brand name consumerism, and this is unlikely to change in the near future; (b) just as the mass consumption of logo items is promoted by massive corporate advertising campaigns often linked to college and professional sports teams and events, so the abuses behind these items can be exposed through publicity campaigns that exploit the symbolic power of logos and brand names; (c) contemporary universities are corporate universities that derive substantial income from licensing their logos to the corporations that mass market sports-logo items, and the corporate interest of such universities in continuing to do this can be the basis for their involvement in promoting more decent labor conditions; (d) corporations such as Nike and Reebok make billions of dollars selling such merchandise, and, because their brand names help them to market their goods, and because their profits rely in part on their university contracts, they can be pressured by socially concerned universities into remedying labor abuses if the right combination of strategies is applied; and (e) it is a good thing when students, faculty, and community members can cajole university presidents to join together to promote such socially responsible corporate activity on the part of universities.

The proximate goal of the WRC is thus to involve corporate universities in negotiations with corporate giants such as Nike and Reebok, so that the billions of dollars worth of consumer goods marketed by these behemoths in our consumer society can be produced under marginally less exploitative labor conditions.

4. The WRC is not a mass organization, nor do its constituents form a mass movement. It consists of a small number—one or two dozen—of dedicated and strategically located worker rights groups in places such as Guatemala and Thailand; a few American trade unions—most notably the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), which provided crucial early support to the formation of both USAS and the WRC—in possession of resources, expertise, and organizing zeal, but also stretched thin by declining memberships and proliferating challenges; more than a hundred student groups across the country, each of which typically consists of less than fifty activists, and each of which can mobilize no more than a few hundred students at best on very large campuses; and more than seventy universities and colleges, usually represented in the WRC by administrators who are often legal or financial officials and are most definitely not social activists. Together these constituents are committed to ending specific abuses through publicity and ingenious negotiation with companies like Nike. They pursue these negotiations from what can only be described as relative weakness. For although these parties have moral standing and some economic weight, they lack the financial resources, the organizational unity of purpose, and the sheer power of the corporations with which they deal.

5. The university members of the WRC are corporate universities in every sense of the term; and they are in the process of developing a new, flexible form of organization that is closely tied to the new forms of flexible accumulation in the broader society. The institution of responsibility-centered budgeting, the move toward temporary and part-time faculty and the use of graduate student instructors, the ascendancy of professional schools within universities and the corresponding crisis of liberal arts education, the ascendancy of a consumerist model of curricular choice—all this is well documented. Yet these universities are also unique spaces in the society, for they have, at least in principle, certain pedagogical and civic goals that allow for fairly robust forms of social criticism and make it difficult for their rulers to remain immune to serious moral chal-

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lenge. For this reason many of these universities, in spite of their corporate identities, have chosen both to commit themselves to standards of labor decency, at least regarding their apparel contractors, and to contribute funds to the support of labor rights advocates and monitors in other parts of the world. If the student success in pressing this result is extraordinary, the willingness of university administrators—sometimes under duress but also, to be sure, under minimal pressure compared with the student activism of the sixties—is equally extraordinary. And it suggests that we should be wary of overgeneralizing about the conservatism of the corporate university.

The Limits of the Movement

Although USAS and its allies may talk about putting an end to sweatshop labor and struggling against global capitalism, the WRC is really about remedying specific abuses as they arise in specific locales and, in a broader sense, about publicizing labor abuses and seeking to enlighten consumers and citizens. It is not possible for an organization such as the WRC to do more than this, for it is essentially a monitoring organization that offers support to workers who labor under repressive conditions, lack independent union representation, and are subject to labor law regimes that do not afford them very much freedom of association. Furthermore, these workers live in low-wage economies that rely upon such a comparative advantage to sustain even minimal forms of capital accumulation and economic growth. For this reason, even the best case scenario for the WRC would seem to involve (a) the continued mass production and consumption, on a global scale, of overpriced Nike and Reebok apparel and sporting goods; (b) the continued flourishing of Nike, Reebok, and other purveyors of these typically superfluous consumer items; and (c) the continued existence of serious global labor disparities and indeed even sweatshop labor conditions beyond the reach of effective remediation through the WRC's methods. The WRC's practical vision, in other words, is neither revolutionary nor radical. It is meliorist.

Although the WRC commits itself to the remedy of verifiable sweatshop abuses, it is incapable of putting an end to sweatshop labor conditions. Scarce time and resources make it impossible to effectively monitor, publicize, and remedy labor abuses at all of the thousands of factories—run by subcontractors, labor intensive, easily closed down and moved to other locations if "labor trouble" arises—that operate throughout the world. Even should abuses be remedied at specific sites, similar scarcities of time and energy make it impossible for the WRC to furnish real institutional guarantees that backsliding will not occur. The WRC, in short, is a consortium that supports the work of labor NGOs in labor-repressive locales. It is not a government, nor does it have the enforcement powers of governments. It does not promise, and it cannot deliver, a new regime of labor rights in those places where labor rights are not codified. The most that it can promise is that when workers have serious complaints it will listen and try to make others listen, and that when such complaints are verified it will encourage universities to seek remedies.

Yet the establishment of the WRC has been the central goal and the central achievement of the campus antisweatshop movement to date. The movement then, at its best, can generate only modest effects. It is not a mass social or political movement. It is connected to no powerful political parties or even national labor organizations in any place other than the United States (and it would be a mistake to exaggerate the commitment of even the most progressive U.S. trade unions to global labor rights). It works through creative involvement of labor and human rights activists, trade unionists, students, college faculty and administrators, lawyers, accountants, and corporate officials—taken together, hardly a revolutionary bunch. It exploits the mass media to publicize labor abuses. And it makes use of the new Internet technologies and new forms of networking pioneered by flexible capitalism to do its business. *The antisweatshop movement, in other words, is both in and of the system of globalization whose effects it contests.*

This is not necessarily the way many of its activists see their endeavors. Many view it as part of a broad global challenge to capitalism itself. As one USAS activist put it, "The de-

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mands we posed in Wisconsin reflect a growing movement taking place on campuses today. Most often it is portrayed as a movement of students against sweatshops. Internally, however, this movement is rapidly changing. It is becoming part of the movement of global solidarity against the rule of corporate power." For many activists, the movement corresponds to what Arif Dirlik of Duke University has called a "resistance to capitalism" that is intended to serve as a "building block for the future." Such activists have hegemonic, or rather counter-hegemonic, ambitions. They seek what writer David Harvey has called a new "synthesis" of struggles against capitalist globalization, linking the campus antisweatshop effort to other corporate campaigns—like the campaign against Starbucks—and to protests against the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. The goal is nothing less than a radical transformation of global capitalism. But these activists also understand that global capitalism cannot be challenged head-on. So they promote specific efforts, what Dirlik calls "local experiments," as part of a broader vision of change.

THE ANTISWEATSHOP movement is a work in progress. Its participants share no single narrative or interpretation. Indeed, it is precisely because of this indeterminacy that serious discussion and debate are so important. Nonetheless, there does seem to be a dominant narrative, articulated by writers and publicists, that frames the campus movement as part of a broader anticapitalist struggle. This narrative does not hew to dogma. It does not describe anticapitalist struggle as the necessary outcome of the dialectics of history. Instead, it sees it as an aspiration, a historical project, a way of rectifying undeniable global inequalities. To the extent that this project is advanced in a pragmatic spirit, as a hypothesis about probable causes and links among various activities, it is impossible to pronounce final judgment on it. We may well be witnessing the birth pangs of a new order. There are nonetheless reasons to be profoundly skeptical about this scenario.

One reason is the tension, noted by sympathetic left observers, between the distinct themes and strategies of the antisweatshop movement and the global struggle against capitalism with which it is often linked by antisweatshop activists. Martin Hart-Landsberg, for example, writing in *Monthly Review*, argues that while many of the recent expressions of opposition to capitalist globalization hold great promise, "there is nothing automatic about the future direction of political developments." What is lacking among many activists, he argues, is a serious consideration of political strategy focused on the challenges to building a truly oppositional anticapitalist movement. In this context he notes with dismay that "some antisweatshop campaigns come dangerously close to presenting sweatshops as an historical anomaly that can be ended by using consumer campaigns to encourage capitalists to change their behavior. As a result, many participants begin thinking in terms of good capitalists versus bad capitalists rather than developing an anticapitalist consciousness." The antisweatshop movement, he argues, is too moralistic, too issue-specific. It is, in short, a campaign rather than a movement, an attack on a certain category of capitalist abuses rather than an attack on capitalism itself.

A similar point is made by Naomi Klein. "Anticorporate activism," she writes in *No Logo*, "enjoys the priceless benefits of borrowed hipness and celebrity—borrowed, ironically enough, from the brands themselves." Although such a politicized consumerism represents a genuine form of empowerment, it also has serious drawbacks. "International solidarity," she writes, "is becoming so dependent on logos that these corporate symbols now threaten to overshadow the actual injustices in question. Talk about government, talk about values, talk about rights—that's all well and good, but talk about shopping and you might really get our attention." The danger of activism centered on exposing malign corporate logos is that such campaigns might "degenerate into glorified ethical shopping guides." Even when such moralism can be avoided, she continues, the antisweatshop movement essentially relies on civil society initiatives, corporate codes of conduct, and mechanisms of voluntary compliance. Such an approach represents "a haphaz-

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ard and piecemeal mess of crisis management," and it is antipolitical in its disregard of legal mechanisms and of the political power to change the law.

Klein's basic point, like Hart-Landsberg's, is that the antisweatshop movement is not necessarily as radical as its activists believe. These critics don't question the radical aspirations behind the movement. Indeed, their criticism seems geared toward helping the antisweatshop movement to see the limits of its strategies so that it might over time better advance its radical objectives. Klein, for example, sees the antisweatshop movement as a tributary in a larger stream of anticorporate efforts that together are beginning to form "a citizen-centered alternative to the rule of the brands." While she is quite wary of efforts prematurely to unify or impose discipline on these tributaries, she remains hopeful, indeed convinced, that this unification will come about.

BUT EVEN after we have made the strategic corrections urged by sympathetic left critics, there are two further reasons to be skeptical about the global significance of the antisweatshop movement.

The first regards the voluntarism that it shares with the antiglobalization movement more generally. The mobilization of public sentiment against corporate power has clearly produced impressive results. But it has thus far failed to generate any significant programmatic political alternative to the neoliberal status quo. Though the movement focuses much of its ire on the new hypermobility of capital, the anticapitalist rhetoric of its leaders fails to appreciate what is truly *new* about post-Fordist accumulation and about postmodern politics and culture—its flexibility and its fluidity. Flexible accumulation means more than the ability of capital to move wherever the conditions of exploitation are most favorable; it means the development of new networks of finance and production that simultaneously corrode the power of nation-states to regulate accumulation and the organic solidarities that have historically supported such forms of social democratic regulation. As Manuel Castells observes:

> the social relationships between capital and labor are profoundly transformed. . . .Labor is disaggregated in its performance, fragmented in its organization, diversified in its existence, divided in its collective action. Networks converge toward a meta-network of capital that integrates capitalist interests at the global level and across sectors and realms of activity; not without conflict, but under the same overarching logic. Labor loses its collective identity, becomes increasingly individualized in its capacities, in its working conditions, and in its interests and projects. Who are the owners, who the producers, who the managers, and who the servants, becomes increasingly blurred in a production system of variable geometry, of teamwork, of networking, outsourcing, and subcontracting. . .

What Castells describes at the level of social structure is also analyzed by Richard Sennett at the level of social psychology—the "corrosion of character," the erosion of social and political identities, the development of a new ethos based on the premise of "no long term."

In such a society, individuals lose solid identity. And politics increasingly becomes a sphere of appearances emptied of real content, centering on mediated spectacles and celebrity events and electoral campaigns organized on the logic of mass advertising. The dispiriting political consequence of these developments is nicely summed up by Zygmunt Bauman:

> a situation in which sovereignties have become nominal, power anonymous, and its locus empty. If the traditional question 'What is to be done?. . . is asked ever less frequently, and if when asked it tends to be quickly dismissed on the grounds of a TINA (There Is No Alternative) creed, this is not so much for the lack of ideas as it is [for lack of] agencies which could conceivably carry them out. The assessment of the feasibility of actions and the practicality of projects is a function of the relative strength of the agent and its adversary; and under present circumstances the main question. . . [for] which no clear answer is in sight, is the query "Is anybody capable of doing whatever needs to be done?"

If this is right, the same social structures that produce the harms against which the antisweatshop movement works also function to undermine the possibility of a global oppo-

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sition. Thus we witness the absence of a politically powerful left within the advanced societies and within the world as a whole. Strangely, this is not a problem that has received much attention from the partisans of global anticapitalist activism, for whom, it seems, corporations like Nike, Starbucks, and Microsoft are essentially no different than General Motors or U.S. Steel. Such corporations are attacked for their greed, but rarely analyzed in terms of their role in creating a new, postindustrial and postmaterialist culture with global reach that generates a politics of tactics and shifting alliances rather than of long-term strategies.

This analytic failure is ironic, for in some ways the diverse forms of antiglobalization activism, including the antisweatshop movement, are symptomatic of this new environment. For while these campaigns, boycotts, and demonstrations are usually quite emphatic about what they oppose—Nike factories, Starbucks cafés, IMF policies, WTO mandates—they project neither a compelling alternative vision nor a serious political movement capable of vying for political power. Klein notes this in her essay "Does Protest Need a Vision?" She points out that the new activist model "mirrors the organic, interlinked pathways of the internet." She treats this decentralized activity as

> an ingenious adaptation to changes in the broader culture. . . Like the internet itself. . . [these networks] are infinitely expandable systems. . . as with all things online, we are free to dip in and out, take what we want and delete what we don't. It is a surfer's approach to activism, reflecting the internet's paradoxical culture of extreme narcissism coupled with an intense desire for external connection.

Klein notes the weakness of such activism:

> [T]here is no question that the communication culture which reigns on the net is better at speed and volume than at synthesis. It is capable of getting tens of thousands of people to meet on the same street corner, placards in hand, but it is far less adept at helping those same people to agree on what they are really asking for before they get to the barricades—or after they leave.

Yet she credulously believes that it will produce a new anticorporate "synthesis."

But Klein cannot have it both ways. If this style of activism is an adaptation to the culture, then the culture that forces such adaptations needs to be taken seriously: it resists precisely the kind of synthesis that she believes is necessary to oppose global capital. Klein cannot bring herself to draw this conclusion. She correctly criticizes those who disparage the new activism for what it is, but she wrongly refuses to *accept* it for what it is, and to recognize the anachronistic quality of much of its anticapitalist rhetoric. For while this rhetoric may represent a new form of hipness, and surely resonates with various tactics of "resistance," it does not resonate with the public at large or point toward a substantial political movement.

THERE ARE good theoretical reasons to be skeptical of the more grandiose claims often made on behalf of the antisweatshop movement, for the prospects for a serious alternative to corporate capitalism are quite dim. But there are equally important practical-strategic reasons to be skeptical: meta-narratives about the anticapitalist significance of the antisweatshop movement are not simply misleading; they are positively harmful, misinterpreting what has been accomplished and setting unrealistic expectations. This problem is most evident in the vehemently anticorporate rhetoric often voiced by USAS activists, epitomized by their denunciations of the FLA. The FLA, they claim, is a sham because it is corporate controlled. As one sympathetic journalist put it, "the FLA represents a compromise with corporations" that students and universities have no reason to make. The FLA *is* corporate controlled. And it is a good thing that USAS activists have pressed for the formation of the WRC as an alternative, for they are right to insist that corporations cannot be trusted objectively to monitor their own abuses. But the FLA is not a sham because it is corporate controlled, for we live in a corporate controlled economy. Although antisweatshop activists might like to imagine that their hands are clean of "compromise" with corporations, this is not the case.

Consider some of the basic commitments of the WRC. First, it is committed to the in-

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vestigation of worker complaints, which requires that contractors allow WRC monitors access to their factories. This can only be assured through some kind of negotiation with corporate management. Further, the WRC is committed to remedying labor abuses through negotiation with contractors, and it is opposed to a corporate strategy of "cutting and running" from factories in violation. But such remedies also require collaboration between the WRC's university members and corporate managers and some measure of trust among independent monitors, workers, and management. Indeed, the laudable WRC goal of empowering sweatshop workers to form independent unions also involves the establishment of regular collective bargaining arrangements between these unions and management. In each of these instances antisweatshop activists are correct to insist that there are serious conflicts of interest in play. But such conflicts are not inconsistent with negotiation or even with some forms of constructive, if mistrustful and wary, cooperation. The WRC, in short, is not anticorporate in function. It requires for its successful operation some working relationship with the corporations that it seeks to monitor and change. Perhaps this is why the Guatemalan worker organization COVERCO, a constituent member of the WRC Advisory Board, also belongs to the FLA. Michael Posner of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights has been criticized for his organization's continued affiliation with the FLA, and his insistence that the WRC and the FLA are not necessarily mutually exclusive efforts. And his view makes much sense.

The truth of Posner's observation is shown by the labor crisis still unfolding in the Kuk Dong factory in Puebla, Mexico, that produces sports apparel for Nike and Reebok. In fall 2000 reports of labor abuses in the Kuk Dong factory began to circulate among antisweatshop activists. Soon thereafter four Kuk Dong workers contacted the WRC to outline these abuses and to request assistance. The allegations included low wages, unsafe working conditions, the use of child labor, and the physical maltreatment of workers. But the most serious abuse concerned the suppression of efforts to form an independent union, the harassment and firing of union activists, the violent breaking of a strike, and the expulsion of the many hundreds of workers involved in the strike. Within a short period of time, the WRC kicked into gear and USAS activists across the country publicized this incident and pressed universities to enforce their codes of conduct. In response to this pressure Nike and Reebok agreed to investigate the allegations. The WRC sent a team of investigators to Kuk Dong. The factory, at Nike's urging, eventually allowed this team access to the factory and its workers (unsurprisingly, confidential access to workers within the factory remained difficult, and the WRC investigating team, while tolerated by management, was hardly welcomed). At the same time, Nike and Reebok sought some mediation of the labor conflict and an investigation of their own. They commissioned a Mexican labor attorney associated with the International Labor Rights Defense Fund to investigate and to open lines of communication with both management and workers. Nike, through the FLA, also commissioned Verité, a private monitoring organization, to undertake a more complete investigation of the Kuk Dong situation.

Events in Kuk Dong are still unfolding, but some conclusions are possible. First, the light focused on this incident by USAS activists and the WRC made a tremendous difference and brought public and corporate attention to the issue that it would otherwise never have received. Second, the multiple investigations began, and, although they diverged in some respects, concurred that serious abuses had taken place and that remedies were necessary. Third, Nike and Reebok have taken some initiative—under serious pressure to be sure—to end shopfloor abuses, to have striking workers reinstated, and to make possible a relatively fair union election.

Nothing about this process has been perfect. In many respects the verdict is not in regarding change at Kuk Dong. There can be no doubt that, to the extent that changes have been instituted or initiated, it is only because pressure has been brought to bear by workers on the ground and by their antisweatshop supporters associated with USAS, the WRC, and

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other solidarity groups. There is some forward movement, and USAS and the WRC can feel good about their role. The Kuk Dong situation was the first test for the WRC, and it passed. But it did not pass alone. Crucial roles were played by the International Labor Rights Fund, which belongs to FLA but has an unquestioned legitimacy as an independent labor rights group; the FLA, which helped to broker the interests of Nike, Reebok, and the local factory management, and supported the ILRF involvement and the Verité investigation; and by Nike and Reebok, which have chosen to deflect bad publicity by taking (some kind of) remedial action. Indeed, in some ways the Kuk Dong process seems to epitomize the classic good cop/bad cop routine, with the FLA playing the good cop and the WRC playing the bad cop (with USAS functioning as the baddest of the bad), and factory management stuck between them.

Such strategies may not appeal to many antisweatshop activists, who may prefer a more antagonistic and ideological posture, in which the moral boundaries separating good and evil are more clearly drawn. Good cop/bad cop strategies do not and cannot produce dramatic shifts in the balance of power between classes or dramatic improvements in the conditions of sweatshop workers. They are in many ways unedifying, especially when compared to more dramatic activities such as picketing Starbucks cafés or demonstrating against the IMF. But they may be the most realistic way to assist sweatshop workers and to effect some improvement in sweatshop labor conditions in the absence of powerful political movements capable of advancing strong legislative agendas. For the antisweatshop movement is a partial, improvisational, and bootstrapping effort to develop a moral response to human indignity, and to effect marginal change in the labor conditions of workers for whom even marginal changes can make a world of difference. Indeed, student activists are to be credited for their pursuit of such a strategy, which has been developed in an intelligent way in spite of the discomfiting ideological compromises it has sometimes entailed. Where tensions between ideology and practicality have surfaced, USAS has opted for practicality—a sign, I would suggest, of its political maturity.

As applied in the Kuk Dong affair, this approach is a model for political activists and for intellectuals in the university. It shows that it is possible to carve out small but meaningful spaces of social responsibility and to work against specific injustices in solidarity with others, elsewhere, seeking to do the same. This is what the WRC represents and this is what USAS has helped to create. And this is good.

There is no global response to globalization. There are only partial responses, of the sort embodied in the WRC. The modesty I propose is not very inspiring. Activists often need to believe in a goal radically unlike the present, to frame their activity around a grand narrative of good and evil, progress and reaction, what might be and what is. Teleology gives meaning to their efforts. The rhetoric of global anticapitalism has long served this function, and for some it serves this function today. It has produced much that is good. It may be necessary. But it is also misleading. It promotes a maximalist approach to the remedy of specific abuses and it makes for moralism and binary thinking about alliances and strategies. It is too credulous about what it is possible to accomplish and about the power of righteous activism to effect progressive change. And it is also, alas, a failed rhetoric, without much appeal to those ordinary citizens at whom it is aimed. For these reasons, I believe that skepticism can contribute something important to current strategic discussions about the antisweatshop movement and its long-term significance. It might promote a kind of intellectual and political flexibility that is supremely appropriate for the flexible times in which we live. ●

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Liza Featherstone Responds

As a journalist who has written—and thought—a great deal about the student antisweatshop movement, I agree with Jeffrey C. Isaac that United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) has done an excellent job of achieving modest yet significant reformist victories. I agree, too, that part of USAS's strength lies in its ability to stay focused on specific and achievable goals and to, at times, negotiate with corporations—whether their own universities or the likes of Nike and Reebok. Yet I disagree profoundly with Isaac's assumption that such a strategic approach contradicts activists' anticorporate or even anticapitalist ideals. I also disagree with his blanket dismissal of the possibilities for anticorporate, or even anticapitalist, resistance.

The left often agonizes over the choice between pragmatism versus utopianism. The "reformists" will argue that what's important is making "real" change in the present, rejecting any larger vision as "pie-in-the-sky" irresponsibility, while the "revolutionaries" may reject all present compromise in favor of theorizing about a better future, for which the correct historical conditions are always, somehow, yet to arrive. It's a dumb standoff; reformers need militants to scare the powerful into concessions, as the recent experience of the Fair Labor Association and USAS at Kuk Dong shows. But reformers and militants can also be the same people. USAS's work—like that of many other past activists— consistently suggests the possibility that social movements can exist beyond, or completely outside, this binary. Sometimes radicals make the best reformists, and vice versa.

Isaac characterizes the Worker Rights Coalition's pressure on companies—and students' negotiations with the corporate university—as compromises that belie USAS activists' radical rhetoric and somehow suggest the impossibility of fighting corporations in this new, magical, omni-corporate era. This reveals fundamental misunderstandings, both about student protest and about labor activism. Since its twelfth-century beginnings, student protest has, as Andrew Ross points out in a recent essay in the *Village Voice*, been an *intra-elite* struggle. Within unequal societies, student activists, no matter how radical they may be, use their own elite status to influence other elites (school administrators, CEOs, national governments). By using student power to influence the corporate university, students do not endorse corporatism, anymore than past protests—or the recent living-wage sit-in at Harvard—endorsed elitism or inequality when they made use of activists' elite status. Demanding better behavior from the corporate U is simply students' newest way of making political use of their own class power.

If negotiating with elites is what students do, it's also what labor activists do, whatever their political ideologies. The campus antisweatshop movement was launched in 1997 by a group of Union Summer interns, during a period of intense graduate student labor organizing on many campuses. What Isaac calls "compromise" is an age-old labor movement tactic called "bargaining."

In addition to the U.S.—and global—labor movement, USAS is now deeply influenced by a worldwide movement against corporate control and economic inequality, a movement known in many other countries as anticapitalist. Isaac dismisses that political context and vision as "unhelpful," but I think it has been profoundly helpful, keeping the antisweatshop movement principled and yes, highly practical.

The campus antisweatshop movement was greatly invigorated and strengthened by "Seattle" and by the anticorporate spirit that the protests against the World Trade Organization inspired on campuses nationwide. Many USAS activists participated in Seattle and subsequent demonstrations against state power's collusion with global capital—meetings of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organization of American States, and so on.

These events, along with the anticorporate consciousness that many USAS activists have developed from their own campus battles or from visits to third world countries, have shaped the language and idiom of the campus protests. Although not all student protesters are

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radical—one antisweatshop activist who was occupying the University of Pennsylvania's administration building earnestly described himself to me as a "capitalist"—most will tell you that they are protesting not only sweatshops but the rotten way our world is organized. By that they mean the lack of real democracy, the global income gap, and the fact that corporations and rich people run the world to suit themselves, with no regard for human need or the natural environment. Like other activists in the movement against corporate globalization, many students feel that solving these problems will require a fundamental re-imagining of economic power. "People are drawn in by the horror stories," says the WRC's Maria Roeper, "but then they start seeing how the whole system works."

Isaac does not cite a single instance in which this sort of consciousness has prevented USAS from achieving reforms. It would be difficult to come up with one. If students lacked an anticorporate analysis, they would have been satisfied by university codes of conduct, trusted universities and companies to enforce these codes, and seen no need for further action. They would never have opposed the FLA and formed the WRC; thus, the collegiate apparel industry's only monitoring organization would have been controlled by corporations. They would have accepted Clinton economic adviser Gene Sperling's invitation to set up a monthly meeting, under the pretense that students would then have the opportunity to "shape" the FLA. Had they done so, students would then have given up all their power to pressure either universities or manufacturers.

The victories at Kuk Dong would never have occurred, in part because the struggle itself would never have begun; workers at Kuk Dong went on strike because they knew they had powerful advocates in the WRC and USAS. Sitting down with companies at the boardroom table is very different from sitting across from them at the bargaining table, and students' opposition to a world run by profit-hungry corporations has consistently prevented them from doing the former. That principle has not been moralistic or purist, but practical.

That anticorporate consciousness led to a greater mistrust of the corporate university and an escalation in such confrontational tactics as sit-ins—which are effective. Isaac is right that we shouldn't exaggerate the conservatism of the corporate university. Why? The university is a corporation, but it's a unique one in that a small number of young people can greatly disrupt its daily operations. In general, USAS activists who were less trusting of administrator-CEOs, and thus more militant, were more likely to achieve their goals. Yale, for example, never joined the WRC. Explaining why his group failed while others succeeded, 2000 Yale graduate Saurav Sarkar, who now works for the National Labor Committee, says, "We weren't confrontational enough." Yale Students Against Sweatshops activists never occupied their president's office and consistently believed that they could convince their administration through rational dialogue alone. They underestimated the autocratic, corporate nature of their university and the degree to which it would serve elite interests unless forced to do otherwise. Skepticism about the corporate university leads to disruptive actions that increase students' visibility and bargaining power.

An analysis of "how the whole system works" has also enabled USAS to make connections between sweatshops and other injustices. Many chapters have launched living wage drives on campuses, for example, or are active in the Sodexho Marriott boycott, which is now widespread and has been strikingly successful. Others have begun campaigns to urge their universities to boycott World Bank bonds. They have allied themselves with U.S. antipoverty groups such as the Kensington Welfare Rights Union and strengthened relationships with local unions. Isaac worries that anticapitalism will lead students into "binary thinking about alliances and strategies," yet, looking at the movement's evolution, it's impossible to escape the conclusion that USAS's systemic analysis has actually *multiplied* its alliances and complicated its thinking in admirable ways.

Isaac worries that anticorporate or anticapitalist rhetoric turns off "ordinary citizens." It is important here to distinguish between anticorporatism and anticapitalism, a distinc-

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tion Isaac does not make. Anticorporatism does not turn off ordinary citizens; it deeply resonates with them. It's as American as Jimmy Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*, defending the small business and small town way of life against the bad Mr. Potter, the corrupt embodiment of Big Money, or Julia Roberts and her mighty breasts taking on the chemical companies in *Erin Brokovich*. Among middle-class white people in the United States, anticorporatism has become the dominant idiom of resistance—even penetrating electoral politics, from Ralph Nader's Green presidential campaign to Al Gore's odd "populist" outburst against drug companies. "Ordinary" low-wage workers in the United States and abroad tend to hate corporations. Anticapitalism, on the other hand, *can* be a turn-off; who wants to sound like a glassy-eyed newspaper pusher? But I have never heard USAS activists use hackneyed jargon; few of them waste time debating the significance of Pabloism or the class nature of the former Soviet Union. They are savvy about their audiences, as they should be. Yet many—among themselves, at anticapitalist demonstrations, or in interviews with a sympathetic journalist—espouse anticapitalist beliefs, and such beliefs have, as far as I can tell, only strengthened the movement.

USAS is not the only group within the global movement to be pursuing specific, practical campaigns. Though Isaac cites "picketing Starbucks" as a wild-eyed piece of utopianism quite different from practical USAS strategy, most anti-Starbucks picketing is connected to campaigns led by Global Exchange, which, like USAS, has pursued specific, reformist goals and won concrete victories. Global Exchange, a leading force in larger protests against global corporate power—but regarded by almost no one as a radical organization—has forced Starbucks to buy "Fair Trade" coffee from growers who meet specific environmental and labor standards. If the global movement is to flourish, which I believe it will, such marriages of global and systemic analysis to specific reform efforts will be crucial.

Isaac's understanding of contemporary resistance is impaired not only by his lack of vision—and his lack of sympathy for visionaries—but by his conception of contemporary capitalism as newly amorphous, flexible, and therefore indomitable. I doubt that the situation of a worker in today's global economy really feels so much more hopeless than that of a slave in pre-Civil War America or of a Pennsylvania coal miner at the turn of the last century. It's always been tough to fight those in power. Rhetoric about newness seems particularly irrelevant to the garment industry, which has long been one of the most mobile forms of capital. Even if we do indulge Isaac's breathless awe of the contemporary economy, there's no need to share his pessimism about the possibilities for opposition. In *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri point out, "Globalization, of course, is not one thing, and the multiple processes that we recognize as globalization are not unified or unequivocal." Our political task is to reorganize them and direct them to new ends." Indeed, where Isaac sees infinite adaptability, Hardt and Negri see porousness and fragility; for them, the new regime of globalized capital "creates greater potential for revolution." Increasingly, student antisweatshop activists, labor leaders, and workers alike talk about the "globalization of resistance." When big companies like the Gap and Nike exploit workers around the world, they unintentionally give those workers a foundation for common campaigns, a reason for solidarity.

If anticapitalism is a "failed rhetoric," why are the global elites so worried about it? If global capitalism is so secure in its glorious "flexibility," someone ought to let the world's financial leaders know. It would save them the trouble of holding their meetings in places like cyberspace and Qatar, which they do, increasingly, out of fear of protesters. And someone better let the cops in on the secret; if capitalism is safe, Genoa's hard-working *carbinieri*—and their counterparts from Gutenberg, Sweden, to Washington, D.C.—could sit down, have an espresso, and put away their guns. ●

Liza Featherstone is co-author of *Students Against Sweatshops*, which will be published by Verso later this year.

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Jeffrey C. Isaac Replies

Liza Featherstone argues that United Students Against Sweatshops activists are active in other anticapitalist efforts symbolized by "Seattle," that their anticapitalist framework furnishes them with inspiration and vision, and that their radicalism has thus empowered them. These are good points. Each of them is made in my essay. Had Featherstone paid attention to my arguments, she would know that I do not disparage USAS, and that her own simple binary—those who laud USAS and those who dismiss it—fails.

My point is not to argue that USAS methods are in "contradiction" with their anticapitalist ideology and that therefore they should abandon their ideology in the name of some kind of Hegelian end of history. My point is that there is a serious tension between their anticapitalist ideology and the pragmatics of the Worker Rights Consortium, which is their principal achievement. This tension is a productive one, and it is not my purpose to wish it away. But I do intend to raise some hard questions about it.

Featherstone is wrong to assert that I do "not provide a single example" of the limits of the anticapitalist ideology; I provide two examples: the counterproductive fixation of many USAS activists with the evils of the Fair Labor Association and the difficulty of many USAS activists in coming to terms with the partial success achieved at Kuk Dong and the complex dynamics of that success, which required both "bad cops" and "good cops." Featherstone's comment that "workers at Kuk Dong went on strike because they knew that they had powerful advocates in the WRC and USAS" is both conjectural and absurd. They went on strike because they had real grievances and a history of local organizing. It's a good thing that the WRC and USAS were around, but I see no point in exaggerating their influence. Instead of analysis of these issues, Featherstone offers polemics. The complexities of university life are reduced to her observation that what distinguishes the university is that "a small number of young people can greatly disrupt its daily operations." She responds to my comments on Castells, Bauman, and Sennett by offering the "materialist" observations that workers have always felt unhappy and that "It's always been tough to fight those in power." She eagerly cites Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, a book whose rhetoric in places matches her own. But she fails to note that the bulk of the book's analysis regarding the "decentering" of power does not bode well for her encomiums to "revolution." This is not surprising, however, for it is rhetoric, and not analysis, that concerns her.

Featherstone's most foolish comment is her insistence that I suggest "the impossibility of fighting corporations" and evince a "breathless awe of today's global economy." I commend USAS activism, share its opposition to sweatshop labor, and agree with it that sweatshop labor is not the only injustice of global capitalism (I held these convictions long before USAS or its leaders were born). But this does not mean that I share what Featherstone calls their "vision" or that I join them on the streets of Seattle. At the deepest level, what separates Featherstone and me is our respective conceptions of our roles. She is a publicist. For her, support means boosterism. That is not my role. USAS activists are neither my friends nor my children, and they do not need my coddling. The USAS students I have interacted with, at Indiana University and at the national level, are young adults, impressive and responsible, and they deserve honesty and serious engagement. They have not always liked what I have had to say, but I think they respect me and know that I am someone who is honest and politically responsible. The defensive tone of Featherstone's screed has been completely absent when I have voiced my skepticism with USAS activists. What I have encountered are serious questions and serious arguments made, in a spirit of healthy disagreement, by people who are capable of distinguishing between sympathizers and enemies. This is another sign of the seriousness and maturity of these students. If only the same could be said for their self-appointed patrons of proletarian emancipation. ●

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The New Culture of Apology

Nicolaus Mills

IT IS NO SURPRISE that this past April, after China returned the crew of an American spy plane that made a forced landing on Hainan Island following a mid-air collision with a Chinese jet, the Bush administration went out of its way to insist that it had resisted China's calls for an apology. The president was not only under political pressure to stand firm on America's right to conduct surveillance flights off China's coast; as a Texan and a conservative, he was equally aware of the historic aversion we have to our leaders apologizing to foreign governments for their actions.

We should not, however, allow the Chinese spy plane controversy to obscure a far more important and surprising phenomenon: the rise in America and the world at large of a new culture of public apology.

The breadth of this new culture of apology could be seen in the Day of Pardon Mass Pope John Paul II gave a year ago when he apologized for the errors committed by the "children" of the church during the last two thousand years and declared, "The church, strengthened by the holiness that she receives from her Lord, kneels before God and begs for forgiveness for past and present sins." Six days earlier the Vatican's International Theology Commission anticipated the groundbreaking nature of the pope's apology. In a lengthy treatise, " Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," the commission acknowledged that it could find few precedents in Catholic history for ecclesiastical authorities—the pope, bishops, councils—expressing regret for faults of which they themselves were guilty.

What makes the pope's apology even more striking is that it does not stand in isolation as the act of a powerful leader defying expectations. It reflects the degree to which public apologies, historically a rare event in the lives of nations and institutions, have become a vital part of the global culture. A speech act once considered a sign of weakness, the tribute those lacking power traditionally pay to those with power, has in just over a decade emerged as a strength, a sign that one has the confidence to own up to mistakes.

Among religious groups there has been an outpouring of mea culpas for the damage done to those who were vulnerable to their power. In the United States the Southern Baptists, declaring "we lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery," apologized for the pro-slavery stance that led to their formation in 1845. The Evangelical Lutheran church apologized for the anti-Semitism of its founder, Martin Luther, and for the harm done to Jews in his name, and the United Methodists apologized for the 1864 massacre of one hundred and fifty Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians, which was led by a Methodist lay preacher in Sand Creek, Colorado. In Brazil the Catholic church, in a special ceremony on the beach where in 1500 the Franciscan friar Henrique de Coimba presided over the first Mass in Brazil, apologized for the sins and errors committed by its clergy against local Indians and the Africans brought to the New World as slaves. In the Netherlands hundreds of German Christians gathered to apologize to the Dutch for Nazi atrocities in the Second World War, and in South Africa, in a ceremony attended by Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Dutch Reformed Church apologized to black South Africans for its role in providing religious justification for apartheid.

Among governments there has been a similar pattern of expressing regret for historic misdeeds. Saying "I bow in humility before those murdered," German president Johannes Rau traveled to Israel to apologize for the Holo-

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caust. In the United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair, acknowledging that Britain had "failed" the people of Ireland, apologized for its role in the potato famine. In France President Jacques Chirac apologized to the descendants of Alfred Dreyfus and Emile Zola for the Dreyfus Affair. In Switzerland the government apologized to Jews for its wartime role as a bank for the Nazi regime. In Benin President Mathieu Kerekou sent a delegation to the United States to apologize for his country's participation in the slave trade, and in the United States President Clinton topped all heads of state in the political apologies he made in the nineties, expressing regret for everything from slavery to U.S. sponsorship of a series of murderous regimes in Guatemala.

In this atmosphere even businesses have found that they cannot avoid apologizing for their mistakes. In the past companies have acknowledged their failures—as Johnson & Johnson did in 1982, when, after a tampering tragedy, it destroyed thirty-one million bottles of Tylenol at a cost of $100 million—but apologies have been comparatively rare. In the last decade, however, corporate apologies have come with increasing frequency. In 1994 Intel apologized to consumers for producing faulty computer chips, and that same year, after selling a batch of bad beer, Coors ran a series of full-page newspaper ads under the headline, "We goofed." Then in 2000 the business world took apologies to a whole new level. United Airlines led the way when a labor dispute with its pilots caused the company to cancel thousands of flights. United's chairman, James Goodwin, quickly went on television, appearing in thirty-second spots in which he told United customers, "This summer thousands of people had their travel plans disrupted while flying United Airlines. If you were one of them, I want to apologize personally on behalf of United." Soon after, the heads of Ford and Bridgestone/Firestone embarked on apology campaigns as a result of tire failures. Jacques Nasser, the president and CEO of Ford, took out television and newspaper ads in which he "personally" guaranteed that Ford would not rest until every recalled tire was replaced, and at Bridgestone/Firestone its CEO, Masatoshi Ono, was even more apologetic, appearing before a congressional committee and announcing, "I come before you, to apologize to you, the American people."

WHAT MAKES this new culture of apology so significant is not, however, just the governments and institutions it involves but the change in sensibility it embodies. The new culture of apology reflects the emergence of a post–cold war era in which public discourse has increasingly taken on the ethics and informality of private discourse and produced a different set of expectations from those we are used to. In this post–cold war world, feelings and the display of caring have become, as much as policy, an inseparable part of winning politics, and victims, especially those whose suffering is bound up with their ethnicity or race, have acquired unprecedented moral status.

The apology bears a close resemblance to the confession, which, as Yale professor Peter Brooks noted in his recent book *Troubling Confessions*, typically concludes with an avowal of contrition. But in contrast to confession, in which the emphasis is consistently on the state of mind of the confessant, the apology is at its fullest a reciprocal act. The drama of apology begins with suspense over whether it will be offered and how it will be phrased. But it ends with suspense over whether it will be accepted and what kind of amends it will require. As such the apology is a speech act that fits comfortably into the give and take of our private lives. In our interactions with friends and family apologies are commonplace. We make them for coming late to a party as well as for serious matters. There are even rules about the best way to apologize. Both Emily Post's and Amy Vanderbilt's current books on etiquette provide instructions on how and when to write a note of apology. Judith Martin's *Miss Manners' Guide for the-Turn-of-the-Millennium* has eight different entries under the category of apology.

But in public life, where they can affect untold numbers of people, apologies have been a different story historically. Lawyers regularly advise their clients to avoid apologies, unless they want to be held liable for their actions, and especially in matters of statecraft, apologies have been treated as anathema. It is as if

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over the years those in power had come to accept at face value the Greek proverb, "From the time they invented I'm sorry, honor was lost." Generals have traditionally made it a point never to apologize for killing enemy soldiers or civilians. Neither Julius Caesar in his commentaries on the Gallic Wars nor Napoleon Bonaparte in his memoirs ever apologized for their bloody deeds. Even in the American Civil War, where the six hundred thousand dead were countrymen, apologies are conspicuously absent in the celebrated memoirs of generals Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. Typical is Sherman's disdain for complaints about his march throughout the South. "If people raise a howl about my barbarity and cruelty," he wrote his fellow Union general, Henry W. Halleck, "I will answer that war is war and not popularity seeking."

Politicians have shown a similar aversion to apologizing. They have been willing to go down to defeat for their deceptions and mistakes, but the idea of apologizing has seemed like surrender, even in longstanding democracies in which rulers, in contrast to those who govern by divine right or autocratic power, are assumed to be fallible and thus prone to the kinds of errors for which an apology should be natural.

In America our recent presidents have often seemed guided by the code of conduct John Wayne espouses in the classic Western *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*. As cavalry captain Nathan Brittles, he continually tells the officers who serve under him, "Never apologize. It's a sign of weakness." Faced with intense criticism for the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 and for concealing America's role in it, John Kennedy never came close to offering a public apology. He acknowledged that the invasion had gone wrong at a press conference in which he quipped, "There's an old saying that victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan." He then insisted that he bore "sole responsibility" for what had happened, but that was as far as he went. Two decades later Ronald Reagan took a similar stance over the Iran-contra affair, despite evidence that, contrary to official denials, the American government had been part of an arrangement in which proceeds from secret arms sales to Iran to help secure the release of American hostages were illegally used to aid the contra rebels in Nicaragua. While accepting "full responsibility" for Iran-contra, Reagan insisted on defending his administration's aims and, like Kennedy, neutralized the most damaging attacks on him. As late as 1987 his only concession to critics was that a well-intentioned covert operation had been, in his words, allowed to "deteriorate."

The effect of the modern public apology has been to make this aversion to expressing regret seem archaic. The old notion that an apology can only make the apologizer vulnerable to further demands for public contrition has been replaced by a more complex set of beliefs. These days the apologizer, whether a public figure or a nation, is humanized by apologizing in a way that a wrongdoer who remains silent and appears indifferent to public opinion is not. The apologizer—we need only think of how often an apology is made with a bowed head and lowered voice—acknowledges that, by its very nature, an apology cannot be offered from a position of moral superiority.

But it is not only the apologizer who is changed by apologizing; so too is the historical perspective on the deeds and words that are the subjects of the apology. The wrongs of the past, even the distant past, are no longer dismissed as irrelevant. Their residual impact, whether psychological or social, is treated as important, and in turn these past wrongs are seen as capable of being affected by current actions, which can either compensate for them or, at a minimum, create a context in which a victim's suffering is honored.

WHAT THE emergence of a global culture of apology suggests for America is that we need to look on the public apology differently. This is not to say that in abandoning the John Wayne philosophy of never apologizing we should throw skepticism to the winds. The critic Christopher Hitchens is right when he points out that in recent years we have been victimized by the rise of an apology and restitution business that makes the phony apology a substitute for social action and genuine accountability. We need only think of Japan's grudging apologies to the estimated two

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hundred thousand "comfort women" it forced into prostitution during the Second World War or the gratuitous apology that former Khmer Rouge leaders Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea made in 1998 when they safely returned to Phnom Penh after years of hiding and expressed regret for the millions of deaths they had helped bring about in the 1970s.

The value of the new culture of apology is not that it makes utopia possible. It is that it offers a way of freeing ourselves from the cycle of accusation and counteraccusation that wrongdoing inevitably imposes. The modern apology stands traditional notions of prestige and power on their heads by giving priority to the concepts of justice and mercy so that in the end what becomes most crucial is reconciliation. Victims are not expected to forget what was done to them or to their ancestors, but what is expected, once an apology is accepted, is that victim and apologizer will not have the same relationship they did before an apology was offered. The apologizer, especially if a very powerful nation, gives up the notion that raw status conveys the kind of dominance that ultimately matters. The victim, while not surrendering claims of compensation, gives up the idea of demanding still more apologies and creating an identity based on martyrdom.

What follows from this emphasis on reconciliation is a very different situation from one in which a nation that is defeated in war or a corporation that loses a judgment compensates victims without offering a sincere apology. At the core of the new culture of apology lies the idea that mechanically doing one's duty is bound to produce resentments that will undermine any short-term settlement of a grievance.

In recent years we have not witnessed a public apology as far-reaching as the one German chancellor Willy Brandt, who opposed Hitler from the start, made in 1970 when, on a visit to the Warsaw ghetto, he fell to his knees and bowed his head in a dramatic act of contrition. But we have come to see the difference that public apologies can make in our national life. Whether it is the apology President Clinton made in 1996 to the survivors of the infamous Tuskegee syphilis experiments who were used as guinea pigs by government doctors or the apology made just this year by the State Department and Navy Commander Scott Waddle for the loss of life caused by the submarine USS *Greeneville* surfacing under a Japanese fishing trawler, it is hard to doubt that we are better off as a people for the times we have said we were sorry and meant it. It is also hard to doubt that as a result of the apologies we make, we are more attuned to acting differently in the future. Apologies do not guarantee reparations, but they make them a logical next step, and they give the apologizer and his or her successors (just imagine the pressure submarine commanders operating near Japan are now under) added incentive to avoid repeating the kinds of actions for which they have said they were sorry. ●

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Documenting Workers

Looking at Labor on Film

Leonard Quart and William Kornblum

FILMS ABOUT labor organizing and labor unions come along too rarely, and the best of them are usually documentaries that attract pitifully small audiences. So the debut of *Bread and Roses*, a feature film on labor by Britain's Ken Loach, is an event worthy of attention. Loach's film arrives at the same time as a new documentary by Deborah Kaufman and Alan Snitow, *Secrets of Silicon Valley*, which looks at labor issues in the famous high-tech mecca. The films illustrate two very different ways of attempting to translate contemporary labor issues to the screen.

Loach is an unabashedly politically radical, social-realist filmmaker, one of the few directors who makes films that depict working-class characters confronting oppressive labor conditions, indifferent unions, and callous government bureaucracies. In making *Bread and Roses*, Loach adds to the slim number of Hollywood films that tackle real issues facing working people. What is most unusual about this film is its attempt to mix entertainment, political polemic, and an introduction to Organizing 101 in the same work.

Loach's films have often focused on labor issues. One of his best-known works, the seriocomic *Riff Raff* (1993), is set on a nonunion London construction site where luxury condominiums are being built. In *Riff Raff*, Loach's London is a harsh, class-bifurcated city where the homeless sleep in doorways and eat ravenously out of garbage baskets, and sullen, unemployed, drug-dealing young men permanently inhabit the staircases of dismal, graffiti-filled housing projects. The workers on the building site are a variegated group of exploited Liverpudlians, Glaswegians, native Londoners, Africans, and West Indians who labor under false names and insecure and life-threatening conditions without any redress. By the film's climax, two of the men's fury with the working conditions is so great that they burn down the partially completed building. The camera lingers heavy-handedly on the raging flames and rats fleeing the fire—a quasi-anarcho-syndicalist affirmation of class war, stemming more from Loach's political vision than from the social consciousness of the film's characters.

Bread and Roses takes place in Los Angeles. The film is based on the ongoing Justice for Janitors campaign organized by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). It's Loach's first American-made film, and he centers it on a feisty, sharp-witted, bilingual illegal Mexican immigrant, Maya (Pilar Padilla), who turns into a militant unionist over the course of the film. (In two of Loach's earlier films, *Land and Freedom* (1994), set during the Spanish Civil War, and *Carla's Song* (1996), set in Nicaragua during the contra-Sandinista conflict, he creates passionate, albeit sentimentalized, heroines that are models for Maya.)

The film's opening scenes prefigure the bold and spontaneous Maya's turning into a strike leader. In a brilliantly vertiginous sequence with a great deal of gasping for air and shouting (shot with a handheld camera), Maya and other illegal immigrants flee through the brush across the border. Upon her safe arrival in LA, Maya's sister, Rosa (Elpidia Carrillo), gets her a job where she works, cleaning in a downtown building filled with the offices of banks and high paid Hollywood lawyers. Loach uses a number of long shots that capture the modern office building looming over the cleaners—an image that neatly encapsulates the nature of power and class relations in LA.

The cleaners are employed by Angel Cleaning Services, a nonunion contracting company that takes advantage of their undocumented status. The company does not

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Adrien Brody and Pilar Padilla in *Bread and Roses*. Photo by Merrick Morton.

provide them with health insurance or other benefits and pays them $5.75 an hour for long days—in real dollars, less than half what cleaners were getting twenty years before. In the film, the cleaners have little political or union consciousness until Sam (Adrien Brody), the sweet-natured, anarchic union organizer, convinces most of them about the need to join a union. Sam's unorthodox tactics put him at odds with the union leadership, and Loach clearly endorses his anti-establishment methods. Sam is Loach's ideal radical—unconventional, loose, humane, suspicious of bureaucracies and hierarchies (notably white and male), and committed to the needs of the rank and file, rather than to personal power or abstract political values. Consequently, in a scene where Sam is arguing with a union lawyer-bureaucrat, the film suggests that the leadership is unwilling to take risks, that its only interest is in collecting dues and supporting the Democratic Party rather than organizing the poor and unorganized.

Roger Waldinger, writing in these pages ("Justice for Janitors: Organizing in Difficult Times," Winter 1997), and many other observers of the SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign, point out that the movement's successes have hinged on the combination of energy and sacrifice at the grass roots and effective organizational and legal strategies in the union itself. Perhaps this theme does not translate into gripping cinema, but Loach can be faulted for sentimentally siding with the charismatic organizer to the detriment of the workers' need for effective and coherent organization.

He also misses a far more cinematic opportunity by failing to capture the popular excitement among pedestrians and office workers in the streets of downtown Los Angeles that the janitors' campaign has often generated. *Bread and Roses* is basically a polemic, albeit a moving one. As is his wont, Loach grants a great deal of warmth and vitality to the group scenes where the workers party, dance, picket,

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march, and sing "We Shall Not Be Moved" in Spanish. In fact, he allows the strikers' rallies to go on at length, so he can drain every bit of political emotion out of the scene and affirm his commitment to collective action.

However, Loach barely individuates the workers—except for the diligent, stolid Reuben, the one cleaner who has options. And although Loach may not grant his central characters—the two sisters, Maya and Rosa—much of an inner life, they still exist as more than ciphers or stereotypes, especially the harsh and loving Rosa. Maya is optimistic, alive, and foolhardy, while Rosa, the film's most defined character, is convincingly angry, controlling, and cynical about the union and its promises—believing in "Justice for Rosa." She is a woman who has spent her young adult life coping with the most soul-destroying conditions—working in a sweatshop and as a prostitute in LA, so she could support Maya and her mother in Mexico. Rosa is a survivor, and her strong will, desire, and capacity to keep everything together carry a great emotional cost.

However, Loach is much more concerned here with the janitors' economic and social situation than with Rosa's personal drama. The film is so focused on the problems of the workplace that it barely touches on the social texture of LA's Hispanic neighborhood life. It's possible that Loach—who in his English working-class films like *Kes* (1969) and *Raining Stones* (1993) richly evoked the atmosphere and social dynamics of pub, street, and school—felt less at ease in LA. Still, *Bread and Roses*, despite being a less layered film, is a rousing, emotionally affecting work.

Bread and Roses contrasts markedly with the few Hollywood films that have dealt with labor unions and labor conflict. Like Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954), such films have often portrayed the unions as not much different from organized crime. Or they have subordinated an exploration of the union ethos to personal dramas depicting the redemption of alienated, adolescent characters like *On the Waterfront*'s Terry Malloy (Marlon Brando). In the 1970s, Hollywood produced three films that focused on the labor movement. Two of them, Paul Schrader's *Blue Collar* (1978) and Sylvester Stallone's *F.I.S.T.* (1978), reduce everything that is wrong with the union movement to criminality. It's not that a number of unions weren't corrupt—it's just that crime and violence are much easier to translate into Hollywood genre formulae than films that explore other weaknesses of the union movement, such as the sense of privilege and complacency sometimes visible in union officers and their alienation from the rank and file.

The third film to come out of the seventies, Martin Ritt's *Norma Rae* (1979), is probably closest in sentiment to *Bread and Roses*. *Norma Rae* depicted a union organizing and representation campaign and eventual victory in a southern cotton mill. The film shares some elements with *Bread and Roses*: a spunky female protagonist, Norma Rae (Sally Field), who leads the campaign; a sophisticated, aggressive Jewish organizer from New York who acts as her mentor and guide; and a textile company (a stand-in for the J.P. Stevens company) that is utterly unresponsive to the onerous conditions in the mill. It's a theatrical and manipulative film, built on reaction shots and a powerful dramatic moment where Norma Rae, protesting her eviction from the plant, jumps on a table holding a cardboard sign with the word UNION on it. Her fellow workers shut down their machines—leaving the room resoundingly silent.

Norma Rae is shot on location and based on a real story and strike, but it's not social realism. Its interest is focused more on the heroine's realizing her potential than on labor issues. Norma Rae has spent much of her life being abused by men, but the strike gives her an opportunity to discover she's a courageous, intelligent, and independent woman. The union gains recognition, but the film's real triumph is Norma Rae's.

If you are looking for a more truthful and incisive portrait of labor by American filmmakers, your best bet is the documentary. Among the many documentary films about labor issues, Barbara Kopple's Oscar-winning *The American Dream* (1991) stands out. The film brilliantly and sympathetically evoked all the central characters and positions in the lengthy strike against the Hormel Meatpacking

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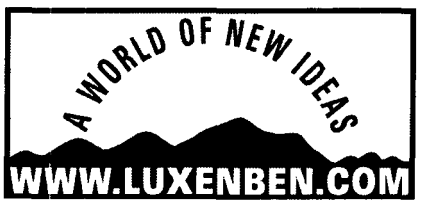
Corporation that took place in Austin, Minnesota, in the mid-eighties. Kopple's interviews get the people talking in an unselfconscious, revelatory manner, and the film avoids turning the strike into a struggle between heroes and villains. It's one of the most politically nuanced, and emotionally complex treatments of a strike we have ever seen.

In the tradition of *The American Dream*, this year, Berkeley-based filmmakers Deborah Kaufman and Alan Snitow (*Blacks and Jews: Ambivalent Allies*) produced *Secrets of Silicon Valley*. The sixty-minute documentary is an attack on the New Economy's old-fashioned exploitation of its workforce and the immense economic gap in Silicon Valley between those who have made it and those who work on the assembly lines. Without narration and primarily dependent on talking heads, the cogent, if stylistically unimaginative documentary makes the case that the enlightened self-image of the Internet corporations covers up their use of high-tech sweatshops. A secret of the Valley is that temporary workers, often immigrants, labor at jobs where injuries are rife and the speed-up is the norm.

The film's two main characters, Magda Escobar and Raj Jayadev, are effective witnesses to these facts. Jayadev loses his job in a Hewlett-Packard packaging plant because he tries to blow the whistle on dire working conditions and severe pay inequities. Escobar finds her efforts to run a computer-training center in East Palo Alto defeated by the rising rents that force the people she is trying to reach out of the community.



Although it lacks the brilliant cinema-verité immediacy of the more popular *Startup.com*, *Secrets of Silicon Valley* is much more pointed in its depiction of class abuse even before the dot-com bubble burst. Similarly, Kaufman and Snitow show some of the difficulties in organizing workers that are left out of the more dramatically-oriented *Bread and Roses*.

What is perhaps most noteworthy about both *Bread and Roses* and *Secrets of Silicon Valley* is that they deal with central issues of class conflict in the vaunted postindustrial economy. Loach dashes any notions that service workers in modern office buildings are better off than third world workers in sweatshops or oppressed African-American and immigrant workers in southern chicken-packing plants. *Secrets of Silicon Valley* exposes the exploitation and class contempt that belie the squeaky clean, image-conscious, high-tech information economy. If only there were more labor films like these, especially ones that take us to the more hidden sectors of the economy where used and abused workers fight for collective bargaining rights.

The disadvantage of documentaries, including *Secrets of Silicon Valley*, is that they are often difficult to find once they have been seen briefly on television, and they rarely reach a mass audience. Feature films dealing with labor are scarce, but a *Bread and Roses*, despite its flaws, makes for a stirring film—one that could connect with a large audience if it ever acquired widespread distribution. Loach again provides cinematic testament to his continuing faith in the capacity of members of the working class to confront the political and economic powers that oppress them and to renew their lives. ●

Leonard Quart is co-author of the forthcoming *American Film and Society Since 1945* (third edition) and a contributing editor of *Cinéaste*. William Kornblum is a professor of sociology at the City University of New York.

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The New Men of Power

Nelson Lichtenstein

THE NEW MEN OF POWER is a study of trade unions and their leaders, the American political scene, and the prospects for a radicalized democracy in the years just after the Second World War. When C. Wright Mills published the book in 1948, it identified a newly empowered set of strategic actors, who led the nation's most important progressive institutions, "the only organizations capable of stopping the main drift towards war and slump." But unlike his politically acute, agenda-setting volumes published during the 1950s, of which *White Collar* and *The Power Elite* are the best known, Mills's equally expansive probe into the meaning and future of U.S. trade unionism quickly fell into the shadows. By the mid 1950s few observers would have called American unionists "a strategic elite," as Mills had once argued in a book whose very title now mocked the waning influence of a labor leadership firmly wedded to the Democratic Party, cold war orthodoxy, and the collective bargaining routine. Organized labor seemed a stagnant force, largely defenseless against the political and economic hammer blows that befell the rank and file during the 1970s and 1980s.

But *The New Men of Power* bears rereading at the dawn of the twenty-first century. This is not because the contemporary labor movement has regained the power held by union leaders in the 1940s, when Mills and his associates made the surveys and drafted the chapters that went into the book. Unions are far less powerful, in terms of relative membership, raw economic power, and political influence than they were when *The New Men of Power* appeared. Nor does the American working class face an immediate, consciousness-changing crisis, such as a new war or a new depression, which Mills himself expected to put the unions at the center of the nation's political thought and action.

Enough has changed, however, to make the ideas and speculations put forward in *The New Men of Power* useful and exciting. Today, as in 1948, the unions stand on the left side of American politics and culture. They are organizing again and recruiting a new generation of young activists who seek to infuse the labor movement with a radical élan. New leaders have ascended to important posts in the trade union movement, and the old iron curtain that once divided official labor and the broad American left—academic, feminist, socialist, African-American, Latino, and gay—is rusting away. Faced with a world of global production, a nearly useless labor law, and a corporate opposition that remains intransigently anti-union, many otherwise conventional union leaders have been forced to look for new allies and new ideas; likewise, social activists and intellectuals have come to see the revival of a powerful trade union movement as essential to their dreams for a better world. Living-wage campaigns, labor teach-ins, and demonstrations against a corporate definition of globalism have helped labor throw off its parochial chains.

A similar sort of creative excitement infused the union movement in the mid-1940s when Mills began his study of the labor unions and their leadership. The labor movement had grown nearly fivefold in little more than a decade, and at fourteen million strong the unions then enrolled about one in three non-farm workers. Politically, the trade unions defined the left wing of what seemed possible in American politics. Although the American Federation of Labor was larger than the decade-old Congress of Industrial Organizations, the latter was a more dynamic social formation, whose fractious leadership represented almost

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every left-of-center political tendency in the nation: FDR liberals, Catholic corporatists, old-line socialists, a handful of Trotskyists, and a far larger communist bloc. Most important, the great industrial unions of that era contained a remarkable layer of alert, politically conscious militants who gave leadership to an industrial underclass—immigrants or the sons and daughters of immigrants, African-Americans, Appalachian whites, the unskilled and the uneducated—whose voice had long been muted.

The unions that made up the CIO and the AFL were collective bargaining institutions, but in an era of New Deal social regulation and wartime economic controls, their function had become political to the core. Labor's men (and a few women) served on the War Labor Board, took posts inside the War Production Board, and filled many key positions in the Office of Price Administration. They were far less influential than their corporate counterparts, but in a political economy in which the idea of tripartite governance, involving organized labor, corporate management, and representatives of the New Deal state proved ideologically potent, unionists were reaching for a kind of society-wide power well beyond the traditional world of firm-centered contract bargaining. Indeed, the great set of postwar strikes that began late in 1945 were intrinsically political, designed not simply to raise wages, but to make corporate prices, production, and planning subject to both union demands and government regulation.

MILLS ENCOUNTERED this laborite universe by a circuitous path. He was born in Waco in 1916, and came of age in a Texas devoid of the political passions others found so consuming during the Great Depression. "I did not personally experience 'the thirties,' " he once remarked. "At the time I just didn't get its mood." Mills became, according to the nomenclature of the 1940s, a radical "anti-Stalinist," but his politics, on topics both foreign and domestic, remained refreshingly unburdened by the trauma and disillusionment that had transfigured so many other left-wing thinkers at the end of the 1930s.

Mills took a sociology Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin and quickly moved on to his first academic job at the University of Maryland. In Madison, Mills encountered two teachers who would have a large impact on the questions he would ask in *The New Men of Power*. The first was Hans Gerth, a left-wing German émigré who introduced Mills to the great European social theorists, especially Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Karl Mannheim. Mills thought Gerth "the only man worth listening to in this department." Later they would collaborate to translate and publish the writings of Weber, whose fruitful impress upon the Millsian worldview is evident in almost all his work. Weber valued property, order, and individual liberty, but he nevertheless sought to trace out the multifaceted process of bureaucratization and rationalization that was a characteristic feature of modern capitalism. Mills would not find it difficult to apply a Weberian analysis to the leadership strata of the American trade unions.

At Wisconsin, Mills also took Selig Perlman's well-attended classes on socialism and capitalism. Although Perlman disdained the left, or any sort of self-conscious intellectualism within the unions—his famous "job conscious" interpretation of the labor movement left little room for a visionary transformation of society—his brand of economistic institutionalism coexisted easily with a Weberian emphasis on functional role, legal constraint, and social status. As *The New Men of Power* demonstrates, Mills did not share Perlman's anti-Bolshevik hostility to intellectuals as an alien, corrupting presence within labor's body politic, but Mills did take from Perlman's lectures an appreciation of the history and institutional flavor of the American unions, especially as they served to mobilize and sell the labor power of their members, thus making unionism functional to the capitalist marketplace. Even as a pro-union radical, Mills remained acutely aware of the organizational logic and economic forces that made for conservatism and defensiveness within these institutions of the working class.

His real exposure to a radical understanding of labor's potential came at the otherwise provincial campus of the University of Maryland. Here Mills encountered a vigorous set

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of young historians: Kenneth Stampp, Frank Friedel, and Richard Hofstadter, whose brother-in-law, Harvey Swados, later a well-known novelist and journalist, would remain a lifelong friend. This circle soon put Mills in touch with an anti-Stalinist world of writers, intellectuals, and activists centered in New York. He wrote for *Partisan Review*, the *New Leader*, and the *New Republic*; and he collaborated with Dwight Macdonald in founding *politics*, the amazingly influential "little" magazine whose critique of the warfare state, advocacy of radical pacifism, and search for new forms of democratic participation prefigured much of the political sensibility of the New Left a generation later. By 1945 Mills was reading *Labor Action*, the revolutionary broadside published by the "third camp" Trotskyists in Max Schactman's Workers Party.

MANY OF THE key ideas that would later appear in *The New Men of Power* are found in the wartime essays and reviews Mills sent north from College Park. In a 1942 issue of *Partisan Review*, he hailed Franz Neumann's dissection of the Nazi regime, in which an imbricated set of political, industrial, and military elites created a system of state capitalism and eviscerated an independent working class. "If you read his book thoroughly," wrote Mills, "you see the harsh outlines of possible futures close around you." Like Schactman, Macdonald, and Swados, Mills did not see the Second World War as a necessary defense against the fascist menace, but as a step toward an American version of the militarized, leviathan state. This is what Mills would call "the main drift." He would have served if the military's doctors had passed him through—high blood pressure and a weak heart would later kill him—but Mills still thought the war "a god dammed blood bath to no end save misery and *mutual* death to *all* civilized values."

At the core of Mills's analysis was a crisis theory of capitalist development. The system was inherently unstable, prone to a recurrent cycle of depression, war, and hothouse boom. Mills expected another slump in just a few short years, And according to this analysis, so too did the most sophisticated representatives of big business, who backed an administratively guided political economy, a sort of postwar New Deal, but with a much more authoritarian, business-oriented elite firmly in command. At various points in *The New Men of Power*, Mills calls this "a corporate form of garrison state" or "a state capitalism with many corporate features," but whatever the nomenclature, it is "the main drift" that leads eventually to what Neumann called "totalitarian-monopolistic-capitalism."

Mills's outlook, however, was not one of despair. Increasingly he looked to the labor movement, "the chief social power upon which a genuine democracy can rest today." Influenced by the Schactmanite Trotskyists, Mills saw within organized labor the potential for the emergence of a third camp that could resist both Stalinist and capitalist oppressions. He therefore applauded wartime union militancy, defending the otherwise unpopular set of coal strikes led by John L. Lewis in 1943.

Eager to get out of College Park, Mills leaped at the chance to take a research post at Columbia University early in 1945. There Mills juggled two or three projects at a time, supervised almost a dozen researchers, and spoke before both academic audiences and the unique New York world of labor intellectuals and radical activists. J.B.S. Hardman was one of the first people Mills looked up in New York, and he proved both a collaborator and a model for the kind of labor intellectual Mills thought so central to the future of the labor movement. Hardman (né Jacob Benjamin Salutsky) came out of the great tradition of Jewish radicalism under the czars. Exiled in 1908, Hardman sailed for New York where he moved easily from radical, Yiddish-language journalism to editorship of the *Advance*, organ of Sidney Hillman's Amalgamated Clothing Workers. By 1944 Hardman, like Mills, had also come to see the need for the projection of a more programmatically radical agenda within the house of labor. To vitalize the unions and prepare them for the postwar battles, he founded the Inter-Union Institute for Labor and Democracy (IUI) and began editing a new monthly, *Labor and the Nation*, which began publication in 1945. Here Hardman sought to give voice and coherence to the work and ideas of the

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anticommunist but socialist or social democratic staff intellectuals, journalists, and academics, who still represented an important current within the unions and among labor's close allies.

Mills joined the Inter-Union Institute, wrote frequently for *Labor and the Nation*, and became friends with Hardman, who opened doors for Mills throughout the labor movement and gave him a feel for the social texture of the New York unions. In *The New Men of Power* much of the introduction, "What Are Labor Leaders Like?", where Mills plays brilliantly with the contradictory character of union officials, reflects the inner history of Hardman's Amalgamated, from pre–World War I insurgency to late–New Deal statesmanship.

But Mills did not just use Hardman for insights into the structure of the unions. He thought that through the IUI he might have found the vehicle by which radicals such as he could have an impact on the labor movement. "Many of the new research people," he wrote in 1946, probably indicating his own feelings, "are disaffected and morally unhappy: they will their minds to people they don't like for purposes they don't feel at one with....What some of them really want is to connect their skill and intelligence to a movement in which they can believe; they are ready to give a lot of energy to an organization that would harness these skills in the service of the left. And the left to most of them means labor." Thus the dedication in *The New Men of Power* is "for J.B.S.Hardman, *Labor Intellectual*."

TAKEN AS A WHOLE, *The New Men of Power* reflects the dual nature of Mills's labor research project: an empirical set of core chapters that illuminates the character of modern unions and the state of mind of their leaders, enclosed within the more speculative, programmatic chapters that offer a Millsian analysis of the trajectory taken by U.S. capitalism and its political leadership, along with his own, barely covert "radical program for America today." The survey research itself, both the questions asked and the interpretation of the results, reflects a highly politicized probe into the mentality of the labor leadership. Mills, Hardman, and other like-minded observers wanted to know if an empirical basis existed for prodding the unions leftward, if and when a new economic or political crisis hit. This was not value-free sociology.

Mills's survey research found that CIO union leaders were much younger than their AFL counterparts, that the industrial unionists were better educated, and that for most workers union activism was a more certain path to upward mobility than recruitment into the ranks of management. As Mills and his staff undoubtedly expected, a larger proportion of CIO unionists than those in the AFL were willing to contemplate formation of a labor party, but not before the 1948 campaign. Leaders of both organizations still feared the power and intentions of big business, and Mills found that an extraordinary 69 percent of all industrial union leaders considered fascism to be a definite threat in the United States. The questionnaires Mills collected from hundreds of labor leaders lend little support to the idea that unionists and managers embraced a postwar "labor-management accord," at least not before 1948.

In June and July 1947 Mills finished what he described as "a fairly good draft" of a book then entitled "The Labor Leader: Who He Is and What He Thinks." It was written at a ranch outside of Reno, Nevada, where Mills was staying while awaiting a divorce from his first wife, Freya, whom he had married when he was an undergraduate at the University of Texas. In the offing was marriage to twenty-four-year-old Ruth Harper, a Mount Holyoke College graduate whom Mills met late in 1946 when he hired her to work on *White Collar*, for which he had already begun to assemble research data and interviews. Mills thrived in the high desert. Between Jeep excursions, horseback rides, and sessions on a newly purchased guitar, Mills churned out the manuscript, 432 pages in just five weeks. "It just rolls out," reported Mills to his parents. "Wrote it like free association," he told Dwight Macdonald. And it was in Nevada that Mills encountered an old Wobbly who provided the epigraph for the book's frontispiece. It's a "honey" he wrote to Ruth, " 'WE AIN'T GOT NO LEADER. WE'RE ALL LEADERS.' That has just the right irony for a book on labor leaders."

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The finished draft was not due at the publisher until early 1948, so Mills had time to send about half a dozen copies to friends and colleagues, including Macdonald, Gerth, Swados, Columbia's Robert Lynd, and William Miller, a historian of business who was one of Mills's best friends. We don't know precisely what revisions Mills made, but his attendance at the November 1947 convention of the United Automobile Workers had a large impact on the final book manuscript, especially the two last chapters in which he is both more hopeful and more radical concerning the unions than either his introduction or his survey research might otherwise warrant. Mills was a partisan of Walter Reuther, an ex-socialist who had already fought his way to the UAW presidency, but when Nathan Glazer—then an assistant editor at *Commentary*—asked him to write an essay on the auto union, Mills became even more attentive to the outlook and ambience of the young intellectuals and labor militants who made up the general staff of the Reuther caucus within the million-member UAW.

To Mills "the most impressive thing about the United Auto Workers union is the spectacle it affords of ideas in live contact with power." His excitement was justified. In 1947 the UAW was the nation's largest trade union confronting the very largest corporations in the world. The membership was militant and the leadership young, fractious, and highly political. Mills called it "a union amazed by itself." Indeed, the forty-year-old Reuther almost perfectly exemplified what Mills saw as the new union man of power. Mills was not uncritical of Reuther—he thought the UAW chief might well "become a 'human engineer' for some sort of state capitalism guaranteeing industry disciplined workers"—but he put these doubts aside to applaud the programmatically coherent victory of the Reuther caucus over the coalition of communists and placeholders with whom they had been at war for a decade. Mills called the Reuther victory at the 1947 UAW convention "a democratic rank-and-file revolt against a disintegrating machine." It seems likely that when he retitled his book *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders* sometime during the winter or spring of 1948, he was thinking of Reuther and his circle. Here Mills found the "union-made intellectuals," not the New York variety, "intellectuals without fakery and without neuroticism." Among them were Nat Weinberg, the UAW's new research director, who came out of City College, and Jack Conway, Walter Reuther's top assistant, who had studied for a Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Chicago.

MILLS SAW such men as his natural audience, so in *The New Men of Power* he worked hard to avoid the language either of academic sociology or of the conventional left. Earlier, in applying for a Guggenheim grant, Mills asserted his wish "to rid myself of a crippling academic prose and to develop an intelligible way of communicating modern social science to nonspecialized publics." Mills also sensed the exhaustion of Marxian language in his time, and he tried to come up with alternate words and phrases, even if his ideas were still thoroughly meshed with those of the socialist tradition. We therefore find no reference in *The New Men of Power* to the bourgeoisie, imperialism, ruling class, the masses, and certainly nothing on the "labor lieutenants of capital." Instead we find phrases such as "the main drift," or "the grand trend," to describe the trajectory of a militarized capitalism. And in a letter to William Miller, who questioned the definition of the word "intellectual," much used in *The New Men of Power*, Mills responded, "by intellectual here we mean humanitarian socialist. What the hell else? So I'll say so in some innocent, hard-boiled way." He feared that because his book was "so very political" it would be pigeonholed as merely sectarian. Thus his search for a new language of class and politics was designed to win him the broader audience he craved. When Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., endorsed it as "genuinely democratic and boldly radical...stimulating and fruitful," Mills sighed with relief: "Well! Anyway, it shows we can get away with it among the liberals."

Mills certainly put his politics front and center. This begins in the first chapter, "The Political Publics," where he offers a panoramic view of what he sees as the decisive points on the postwar political compass. The phrase "po-

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litical publics" is important to this typology, and in Mills's mind is quite distinct from the more passive, uninformed "public opinion." The political publics are more self-conscious, more politically alert, communities either of ideology or interest that bring to bear a particular sensibility to the issues of the day. They formulate the ideas and programs that operate on the consciousness of the passive, atomized mass.

Mills describes five such publics, but they are of radically unequal weight. The first two, the "far left" and the "independent left" consist of but a few thousand individuals, and as Mills describes them, it is clear that he is talking about his friends, comrades, and erstwhile collaborators. But he is hardly uncritical of this milieu. Although Mills was ideologically close to Schactman's Workers Party (Harvey Swados was a member), he found the Trotskyists to be "bureaucrats without a bureaucracy" and adherents to a "popish set of ideas." Thus Mills never joined up, even as he took a good bit of his ideological firepower from these neo-Leninists: the idea that labor had to see itself as a "third camp" hostile to both capitalism and Stalinism, the concept of a "permanent arms economy," the disdain for the liberal center, and the expectation that when the postwar slump finally came the ranks of the left might well multiply many fold in the contest for power.

Mills is much harsher on the independent left. One suspects his animus is largely directed at Dwight Macdonald and the circle of *politics* writers and readers, of which he was once a founding member. By the late 1940s Mills thought Macdonald had moved to a political dead end: they both feared the encroaching power of a leviathan, corporate-military state, but Macdonald had lost faith, not only in the labor movement, but in any political solution to the moral crisis enveloping the modern world. In stark contrast to the Reutherite intellectuals so hopefully come to power, Mills charged the *politics* circle with drift and hopelessness, "oscillating between lament and indignation." Thus Mills sharply attacked Macdonald's characterization of the unions as a "bureaucratic net ensnaring the people." Of course, Mills also foresaw the possibility of this Weberian devolution, which may account for the vitriol with which he attacked its premature proponents.

Mills identifies the Sturm und Drang of headline politics with the next two publics: the liberals, whom he finds "continuously excited and upset" but programmatically incoherent, and the practical right, who have no well-worked-out ideology, but see politics as an immediate source of economic gain, legislative advantage, and anti-union muscle. The liberals read the *Nation* and the *New Republic*, pine for FDR, and look to Henry Wallace with some favor (Mills wrote just before the Truman revival of 1948 had begun and before the apogee of the liberal, anticommunist assault on Wallace, who was then running for president on a communist-backed Progressive ticket). The practical conservatives, identified with main-street business and small-town virtue, find their champions in Robert Taft and the congressional Republicans, who in 1946 had swept the Democrats out of power for the first time in sixteen years. Considering the extent to which these publics monopolized the overt world of mid-1940s politics, Mills gives them rather short shrift. He caricatures both the ardent liberals and the fervent conservatives, missing the nuances that divide each camp and underestimating their staying power, most notably that of the practical conservatives, whose influence would grow dramatically in the years after Barry Goldwater rose to prominence. Mills's relative disinterest derives from his expectation that when the postwar slump really came, these noisy combatants would fade from the scene, subordinating themselves to those who advance a more systematic set of political ideas. Power, writes Mills, will "shift toward those who are ideologically and strategically prepared for it."

Mills throws the communists into the catfight between liberals and conservatives. Today, most historians recognize that whatever the Communist Party's relationship to Soviet power, the party's social, cultural, and laborite ambitions represented something organic to the traditions of the American left. They were a motive force in the world of New Deal labor and 1940s liberalism, in the civil rights movement, and even in the nascent rebirth of femi-

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nism. Mills had to acknowledge some of this—he devotes an entire chapter to the CP's influence within the unions—but like so many of his friends on the anti-Stalinist left, Mills was essentially contemptuous and dismissive. From his Columbia perch, Mills saw the party as composed of Union Square hacks and an ever-shifting pool of lower-middle-class enthusiasts, whose influence was less on the labor movement, where they were being eliminated, than on the excitable liberals, to whose political sentimentality they appealed. Mills was an anti-communist, but one who saw the enemy as pathetic rather than dangerous.

To Mills the most formidable public was that of the sophisticated conservatives, to whose analysis he returns throughout the book. These were the men who presided over the great New York law firms, the executives who led the largest corporations, and the editors of the nation's most respected papers. Mills does not use the term "power elite" in *The New Men of Power*, but these conservatives practically define it: "they work in and among other elite groups, primarily the high military, the chieftains of large corporations, and certain politicians. Knowing what they want, wanting it all the time, and believing the main drift is in their favor, these sophisticated conservatives try to realize their master aim quietly." Two decades later, New Left historians would label this kind of manipulation, which effectively created a consensus in so much of American politics, "corporate liberalism." Unlike the noisy right, this corporate-political elite sought not to destroy the unions, but to tame them by recruiting and rewarding a labor leadership willing to deradicalize its own rank and file. Mills saw as their prime ideological weapons the new language of labor-management cooperation and the soporific rhetoric of contemporary liberalism, both of which served to demobilize labor and its leadership.

But these sophisticated spokesmen for American capitalism were hardly liberals themselves; indeed, Mills thought their victory led inexorably toward an American version of Neumann's Behemoth. The elite's effort to stabilize capitalism and buy off the labor movement contributed to the rise of an essentially authoritarian order, a garrison state sustained through a "permanent arms economy." These conservatives wanted "a New Deal on a world scale operated by big businessmen" that would keep open European and Latin American markets in order to forestall the coming depression.

To counter the main drift, Mills envisioned a new labor-based radicalism, outlined in his chapter "The Program of the Left." Here Mills borrows freely from the First World War-era guild socialists, from the circle of American Trotskyists associated with C.L.R. James, and from the left-wing Reutherites. Because he fears that the nationalization of industry, as in postwar Britain, will lead to but another form of bureaucratism, Mills posits the "socialization" of industry through a combination of both workers' control and centralized economic planning. Mills wants an independent labor party, of course, but he also seeks to infuse the labor-left with a syndicalist spirit. Consumer cooperatives, neighborhood price-control committees, and a thoroughgoing shop democracy are all part of his near-revolutionary vision. Mills knows that many readers will see sectarian utopianism here in the place of a more achievable, if prosaic, labor program. He justifies himself, however, by making an existential leap to those "who have decided to throw in with the 'little groups that cannot win.' In fact, the big groups never win; every group loses its insurgency; maybe that is all that is meant by winning. It is a question where one decides to keep placing one's weight."

THE POWER and brilliance of C. Wright Mills lies in his effort to understand the social forces at play in mid-century America and the progressive calculus that might yet generate a democratic combination, even as he remains utterly aware of their reactionary potential. In the penultimate chapter, "The Power and the Intellect," he takes the measure of the salaried middle class. By 1948 Mills had already completed much of the research and some of the writing for *White Collar*, so his cautious optimism here is worth noting. The middle classes may well side with architects of the main drift, especially if and when the great slump arrives, but a bold labor program, designed to keep prices low and the

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corporations on the defensive, might well forestall a white-collar flight to the right and in its place generate a far more inclusive and dynamic labor movement, one that could truly set the national agenda. Mills was hopeful that the burgeoning ranks of the salaried workforce might yet swell labor's power instead of being fodder for the fascists.

The labor intellectuals are crucial to this great turn, however, for without the ideas and program of engaged, practical union thinkers the labor leadership would drift with the conservative, bureaucratic tide. Mills writes that within the labor movement these professional intellectuals "act as leaven, lifting it beyond mere pork-chop contentment," so as to turn the unions into "vanguard organizations." Utopianism? Not if "the power and the intellect" are united. And that is why Mills found trade union leaders "the strategic elite in American society," even as he also warned, on the very last page, that "Never has so much depended upon men who are so ill-prepared and so little inclined to assume the responsibility."

When it appeared late in the fall of 1948 *The New Men of Power* won largely favorable reviews. The magazines and newspapers of the liberal center, like the *Progressive* and the *Nation*, though repeatedly skewered by Mills, offered the book a good send-off. In the academic journals Mills's book also won respectful readers, despite, or even because, of its politics. Ely Chinoy, then conducting the field research that would generate the classic sociological study of blue-collar mentality *Autoworkers and the American Dream*, thought the book "demands and accepts a place for trained intelligence not only in providing piece-meal and limited solutions, but also in suggesting major alternatives for dealing with basic questions." Mills was probably most gratified by Irving Howe's piece in *Partisan Review*. Though not uncritical—Howe thought the book suffered from a "certain lack of maneuverability in argumentation"—he nevertheless anointed Mills for resisting the pessimistic tide then sweeping the ranks of once-radical intellectuals. The book stood "in total opposition to such current inclinations as quietism, ideal-community building, advocacy of 'preventive' atomic war, [and] a truce with the right because of fear of Stalinism."

The programmatic radicalism of an Irving Howe or C. Wright Mills had little future in mid-century America. Even as Mills read the reviews of his book, he was turning his back on what he would later call the labor metaphysic. Given his cresting expectations, the deflation of his labor-left perspective was swift and thorough. Mills was sorely disappointed by President Truman's unexpected reelection. He had voted for Socialist Party candidate Norman Thomas, but his real hopes had lain with the possibility that Reuther and other CIO union leaders would take immediate steps to build a labor-based third party. Had the GOP's Thomas Dewey won the White House, Mills and a goodly number of others on the noncommunist left expected the Democrats to dissolve and a new labor party to come roaring forward. But in the wake of the election Mills saw such a prospect as "quite dead." And when it later became clear that no slump would materialize, the victory of the sophisticated conservatives was assured.

As these developments snuffed out the prospects for a more expansive set of laborite politics, Mills elevated to canonical status the conservative, but contested, trajectory he had hypothesized for the unions in *The New Men of Power*. Writing in mid-1949, in his last essay for *Labor and the Nation*, he argued that the unions were becoming but "another vested interest, an agency of political regulation at an economic price." Thus the organization of white-collar workers, which Mills had once seen as a key to a progressive transformation of the middle classes, would now become merely "unionization into the main drift: it will serve to incorporate them as part of the newest interest to be vested in the liberal state."

When Mills published *White Collar* in 1951, he wrote as if his political enthusiasms of the mid 1940s were some species of ancient incantation. "Trade unions," he wrote, "are the most reliable instruments to date for taming and channeling lower-class aspirations....The old radical faith that the mere enlargement of unions is good because it brings more workers into 'organizing centers' is now naïve, as is the

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belief that winning the white-collar people to unionism is necessarily 'a link to the middle class.' " By the time his last book, *The Marxists*, appeared in 1962, Mills had written off not just the unions, but the Western working class. Looking with expectation to the Cuban Revolution and other third world insurgencies, Mills now dismissed "wage workers in advanced capitalism [who] have rarely become a 'proletariat vanguard,' they have not become the agency of any revolutionary change of epoch."

There was, of course, much basis for such a doleful perspective. The defeat or expulsion of communists from the CIO did not just eliminate an unpopular political current. It chilled all ideological debate and put further shackles on internal union democracy. Meanwhile, in 1950 the UAW, upon which Mills had staked such hopes, signed a five-year contract with General Motors—in *Fortune* Daniel Bell dubbed it "The Treaty of Detroit"—whereby the Reutherites won a higher standard of living for blue-collar workers, but only in return for their assurance of industrial discipline and stability in GM factories. Then, as Mills's friend Harvey Swados would attest after his sojourn in a mid-1950s Ford plant, the working class itself seemed to have rejected, or forgotten, or psychically buried any spark of radical opposition to the status quo. Even if the postwar economy did encounter the great slump Mills had prophesied, it was unlikely to generate the lurch leftward that he and so many other radicals had once expected.

It is therefore a tribute to Mills's courage that even as he turned away from the labor movement, he made no peace with what he conceived of as the main drift. Mills remained at odds with the power wielded by America's elite, at home and in the world. But without a powerful set of allies, or the prospect of such, his only stance was one of moral rectitude and intelligent dissection. He would "debunk, debunk, debunk," he wrote to his editor at Harcourt Brace, "go back to the Muckraker era, which may be one measure of our defeat." He soon transmuted this radical disappointment into what he held to be a "politics of truth." Writing in a 1955 issue of *Dissent*, Mills argued that the independent intellectual must serve as "the moral conscience of his society...asking serious questions, and if he is a political intellectual, he asks his questions of those with power." This was a worthy calling, and it would inspire a generation of New Left radicals a decade hence, but the Millsian perspective no longer sought the fruitful interpenetration of social power and critical intellect that had so animated *The New Men of Power*.

WHAT REMAINS of this book for our own day? As historian and contemporary observer, Mills ignored or got some important things wrong. He was not interested in the social history of the working class: North or South, black or white, immigrant or native-born, women or men. He was unconcerned with the geographic mobility of capital and with the kind of technological change that has so dramatically transformed the nature of work and enterprise. Nor did Mills foresee the capacity of Keynesian fiscal policies to stabilize U.S. capitalism, at least in the first quarter century after the Second World War. Most important, Mills made too much of the distinction between the sophisticated conservatives and the practical right. Although the United States never became the kind of authoritarian society he believed the main drift would inexorably generate, he was much too sanguine about the labor policies of the managerial elite that ran America's largest corporations, staffed its most prestigious law firms, and sat upon its highest courts. Mills feared that the fate of organized labor was one of a claustrophobic incorporation into a hierarchically structured political economy. Instead, after only a single generation of labor-capital accord, even the most internationalist and technologically advanced capitalists adopted the exclusionary union-free program, if not the polemics, of the entrepreneurial conservatives.

But *The New Men of Power* still bears a careful look by a new generation of unionists and social activists. If the unions are once again to become key elements of a new progressive movement, it is important to recognize that they are not in and of themselves radical institutions. Mills himself might well have avoided some of his own disillusionment if he had taken to heart the epigrammatic analysis put forth

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in the book's introduction. Trade unions are hybrid institutions—half monopoly seller of labor, half nascent social movement—and their leadership is just as mixed, though not always in the same personage: "an army general and a parliamentary debater, a political boss and an entrepreneur, a rebel and a disciplinarian." The unions alternately tilt their character toward stolid interest group or expansive social movement, but if and when they do move toward the latter, it is unlikely they will ever fully arrive there.

If the unions cannot substitute themselves for the left—an independent party is certainly needed, or at least an independent political voice—they are nevertheless essential to the health of the democratic polity. Mills saw the relationship between an organized working class and political democracy in stark Germanic terms, as in fact it had played out in 1933 and the years afterward. But the interwoven fate of the labor movement and a viable democracy need not be so Manichean. The erosion of democratic institutions in the contemporary United States is organically linked, at work and in the political arena, to the evisceration of the labor movement. When less than one-tenth of the private-sector working class can speak directly on its own behalf, American politics begins to share some of the characteristics of those societies ruled by more overtly authoritarian regimes. Conversely, where democracy has been reborn in recent years—in Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, and Brazil—its revitalization has been synonymous with the reemergence of a powerful, independent labor movement. In *The New Men of Power* we rediscover what Mills knew so well: the democratic stakes are always high when the labor movement charts its future.

This essay quotes extensively from *C. Wright Mills: Letters and Autobiographical Writings* edited by Kathryn Mills with Pamela Mills (University of California Press, 2000); *Power, Politics, and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz (Oxford University Press, 1962); and from letters and manuscripts held in the Mills papers at the University of Texas. A longer version appears as the introduction to the University of Illinois edition of *The New Men of Power*, to be published in the fall of 2001. ●

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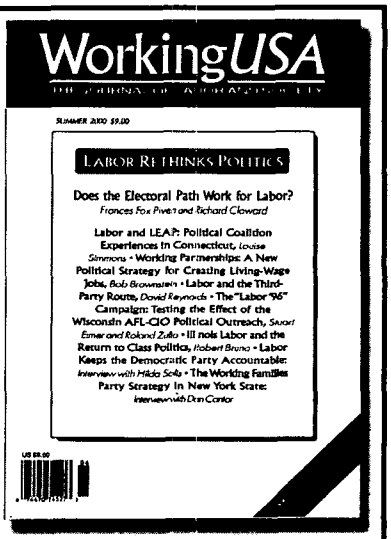

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Denied the Fruits of Their Labors

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TOURING WEST VIRGINIA during the 1960 presidential campaign, John Kennedy was accosted by a miner demanding to know whether he was indeed "the son of one of our wealthiest men." Kennedy admitted that he was. "Is it true that you've never wanted for anything and had everything you wanted?" the miner pressed. "I guess so." "Is it true you've never done a day's work with your hands all your life?" Kennedy nodded. "Well," the miner drawled, "let me tell you this. You haven't missed a thing."

Mindless drudgery or moral elevation? In the Western tradition, work has been both, and for good reason. On the one hand, work, whether physical or intellectual, can be fulfilling. Reversing the usual stereotype, Karl Marx criticized Adam Smith for lamenting the burdens of work and failing to grasp that "the overcoming of . . . obstacles" was a basic component of human freedom. Work pressed men and women to develop their full capacities, a prerequisite for the realization of self. Less romantic types have celebrated work for the relief it provides from the misery of the human condition. Without work, Sherlock Holmes confesses to Watson, there is only tedium—and cocaine. "My mind," he says, "rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants."

But work can also *be* the misery of the human condition. It often requires demanding physical effort. It takes men and women away from more satisfying activity. It can be mind-numbing and oppressive. There is a reason, after all, that work is a biblical curse. And not only hard labor can seem onerous: whatever the charms of the life of the mind, Anthony Trollope noted, they alone could not compel a writer to put pen to paper; only the rewards of money and fame compensated for the painful effort writing required. "Take away from English authors their copyrights," he archly observed, "and you would very soon take away also from England her authors."

In recent years, this historic ambivalence about work has given way to a more flattened consciousness. In our post-welfare era, work is an unqualified good; the only bad thing is not having it. It gets people out of poverty—and out of bed. Going to work "constitutes a framework for daily behavior," writes William Julius Wilson, without which "life . . . becomes less coherent." Work instills discipline and responsibility. It converts the self's drifting energies into vital currents of industry and design. These claims are not new; centuries ago, John Calvin praised work as "a sort of sentry post" preventing us from "heedlessly wander[ing] about through life." What is new is the failure to acknowledge that work does not always fulfill its appointed mission. So complete is our faith in its virtues that George W. Bush, whose own life is not exactly an advertisement for steady work, can nevertheless luxuriate, without a hint of embarrassment or criticism, in its moral grandeur.

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In two excellent new books, Barbara Ehrenreich and Jill Andresky Fraser provide a more skeptical account of life on the job. Ehrenreich goes undercover in the low end of the service economy, working as a waitress in Florida, a housekeeper and nursing-home aide in Maine, and a retail clerk in Minneapolis, while Fraser interviews scores of high-powered professionals at Intel, Microsoft, and other crown jewels of the high-tech economy. Despite their different travels, both authors land in the same place—a nation of intense economic anxiety. But more striking than their depictions of financial stress are their unsentimental renditions of work itself, particularly the nearly authoritarian control to which workers—blue-, pink-, and white-collar alike—are routinely subjected. Both authors show that far from giving men and women an opportunity for spiritual freedom, work today exacts a form of submission that is as far removed from the sunny bromides of the free market as it is from the most minimal definition of a liberal society. Workers inhabit a world less postmodern than premodern, whose master theorist is neither Karl Marx nor Adam Smith but Joseph de Maistre.

EHRENREICH GOT her inspiration for *Nickel and Dimed* over a $30 lunch of "salmon and field greens" with *Harper's* editor Louis Lapham. Dining at a tony New York restaurant, she and Lapham chewed over the question of how the millions of women being kicked off welfare were getting by in today's low-wage economy. "Then I said something that I have since had many opportunities to regret," Ehrenreich reports. "'Someone ought to do the old-fashioned kind of journalism—you know, go out there and try it for themselves.'" Next thing she knew, Ehrenreich was dishing out salad and Key Lime pie to hungry tourists at a downscale Key West restaurant.

Five jobs and three cities later, Ehrenreich concludes that many of today's jobs don't pay enough to support one person—much less a whole family. She works two jobs at a time and eats "chopped meat, beans, cheese and noodles." But in all three cities, rent gets the better of her economy. "You don't need a degree in economics," she writes, "to see that wages are too low and rents too high." But this is a mathematical conclusion, which could have been made with the aid of a calculator. By taking these jobs herself, Ehrenreich is able to capture the material details of workplace indignity—from the obstacle course she is forced to run at the restaurant ("Employees are barred from using the front door, so I enter the first day through the kitchen, where a red-faced man with shoulder length blond hair is throwing frozen steaks against the wall and yelling, 'Fuck this shit!'") to the "unwanted intimacy" she acquires as a maid cleaning the bathrooms of the privileged. Whether rehearsing the taxonomy of dirty toilets ("there are three kinds of shit-stains") or the grueling routine of washing windows in an un-air-conditioned house ("Outside, I can see the construction guys knocking back Gatorade, but the rule is that no fluid or food item can touch a maid's lips when she's inside a house"), Ehrenreich shows how work's various postures of submission recreate the upstairs-downstairs world of old Europe. As the brochure of a Maine cleaning service brags, "We clean floors the old-fashioned way—*on our hands and knees*."

Before she is even employed, Ehrenreich submits herself to the most intimate supervision. The drug tester at Wal-Mart, an "officious woman in blue scrubs," grabs Ehrenreich's hands, squirts a soapy substance onto her palms, and has Ehrenreich wash them in front of her—all to make sure that Ehrenreich does not slip a drug-dissolving agent into her urine. (Once employed, workers are told not only when to pee but when to hold it in: Ehrenreich recites cases of female employees, forbidden to go to the bathroom for up to six hours, wearing pads inside their uniforms into which they urinate.) The personality exams that follow the drug tests are more invasive. Some questions are about politics: does she think that "management and employees will always be in conflict because they have totally different sets of goals?" But others press her to self-revelation. Is she prone to self-pity? Does she think people talk about her behind her back? "The real function of these tests," Ehrenreich concludes, "is not to convey information to the employer, but to the potential employee, and the information

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being conveyed is always: You will have no secrets from us."

On the job, employers closely watch workers. Managers prowl the aisles and hallways, hunting for "gossip"—anything from chatter about weekend plans to talking against the boss. Some of these proscriptions are illegal (prohibiting workers, for instance, from sharing information with each other about their pay). But most are not. As one of Ehrenreich's managers explains, if an employee on the job does "anything at all" besides work—including talking—it's "time theft." We are not that far, it seems, from Frederick Douglass's description of himself as a piece of stolen property.

Such intense supervision, combined with the omnipresent fear of being fired, turns employees—including Ehrenreich—into evasive men and women who shrink before authority and refrain from challenging injustice. After a Wal-Mart manager catches her stealing time and demands to know why she isn't at her computer, Ehrenreich squeaks out a lie and flashes "what is known to primatologists as a 'fear grin'—half teeth-baring and half grimace." At her job in Key West, she fails to protest when an assistant manager fires a nineteen-year-old Czech dishwasher whom she has befriended. "Something new—something loathsome and servile—had infected me," she confesses, "along with the kitchen odors that I could still sniff on my bra when I finally undressed at night. In real life I am moderately brave, but plenty of brave people shed their courage in POW camps, and maybe something similar goes on in the infinitely more congenial milieu of the low-wage American workplace."

ONE OF THE reasons workers have traditionally fled these dead-end jobs for the salaried life of the professional is to enjoy the autonomy that comes with the white collar. But as Jill Andresky Fraser demonstrates in *White-Collar Sweatshop*—a vivid piece of reportage exposing the dirtiest secrets of today's corporations—the top floor of the skyscraper may not be so different from the cafeteria kitchen. If today's professional wants to keep her position, she must prove that she is willing to work all the time, on and off the job, and do as she's told. In her mise-en-scène, Fraser describes the punishing schedule of Gemma, a marketing executive, who rides the 5:29 commuter train back to Scarsdale every day. But Gemma is no 9-to-5er. She makes calls for work the whole way home. Once there, she's back on the phone. After the kids are fed and in bed, she has faxes to send, e-mails to answer, and more calls to return. Her only break is the ten minutes it takes her train to travel the tunnel between Grand Central and 125th Street. "That's time when I couldn't use my cell phone even if I wanted to."

Gemma's schedule—and those of millions of professionals like her—is not freely chosen; managers make sure white-collar employees think they *must* work eighty-hour weeks simply to hold onto their jobs. "The most important role of managers is to create an environment in which people are passionately dedicated to winning in the marketplace," writes former Intel CEO Andrew Grove in *Only the Paranoid Survive*. "Fear plays a major role in creating and maintaining such passion. Fear of competition, fear of bankruptcy, fear of being wrong, and fear of losing can all be powerful motivators." Fraser shows that far from being powered by unleashed self-interest, the past decade's economic boom has a darker source. As a *Wall Street Journal* article puts it: "The workplace is never free of fear, and it shouldn't be. Indeed, fear can be a powerful management tool."

Some corporate chieftains inspire fear the old-fashioned way. Grove, for example, ran Intel the way Al Capone ran Chicago. When an aide is late for a meeting, Grove waits, "holding a stave of wood the size of a baseball bat." Finally, he slams "the wood onto the surface of the meeting-room table," and shouts, "I don't ever, *ever*, want to be in a meeting with this group that doesn't start and end when it's scheduled." Other bosses go high tech, relying on computer technology to monitor an employee's every move. The Investigator software program—used by Exxon, Mobil, and Delta—keeps track not only of workplace performance measures (like the number of an employee's key strokes and mouse clicks per day) but also of troublemakers. Should an employee type an "alert" word like boss or union, Investigator automatically forwards her docu-

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ment to her supervisor. "Back in the fifteenth century," a PR executive tells Fraser, "they used to use a ball and chain, and now they use technology."

Intimidation and spying coexist with phony professions of individualism, while employees terrified of losing their jobs are corralled into elaborate affirmations of faux bonhomie and loyalty to the firm. After NYNEX began to cut its workforce, it required its MBAs and skilled technicians to attend a three-day-long retreat where they were asked to hop around a room. One employee tells Fraser, "The leaders would say things like, 'Look at how creative you are, how many different ways you can figure out to manage to jump around the room.' And we all did it. . . . We all did it." A marketing executive at a radio-station chain explains how a management consultant handed out water pistols to him and his colleagues and had them squirt each other. "There were all these executives running around squirting each other," he says. He thought to himself, "If I don't squirt, will I be gone too?" After a round of layoffs at the Bank of America, corporate higher-ups established a voluntary program for employees to "adopt" an ATM machine. More than 2,800 employees signed up, faithfully cleaning their own machine and its environs—on their own time, without extra pay—just to save their jobs.

ALTHOUGH NEITHER Ehrenreich nor Fraser addresses larger questions of social theory, their accounts pose a serious challenge to many contemporary intellectuals on the left. Against critics—inspired by Michel Foucault—who focus on disciplinary institutions like prisons, hospitals, and schools, these books remind us that the workplace remains the central institution in most people's lives. Foucault and his followers would have us believe that liberalism and the Enlightenment have vanquished the medieval world, and that discourses of freedom, reason, and individuality are the instruments of contemporary domination. But in the workplace, men and women are disciplined not by an impersonal panopticon but by the all-too personal figure of their boss. Liberalism is nowhere to be found, and Enlightenment might as well be the name of the utility company.

Against critics of capitalism, Ehrenreich and Fraser suggest that the great evil of work is not commodification or the culture of the market, but the undignified obeisance workers pay their supervisors. Karl Marx complained that capitalism combined "anarchy" in the market with "despotism in . . . the workshop." But many of his followers have paid more attention to the first than to the second. Ehrenreich and Fraser remind us why the workplace is so important to progressive politics. Men and women spend the bulk of their waking hours at work. It's where they earn their pay and meet the world. It can, if pressure is brought to bear, provide an opportunity for creativity and fellowship. But for the vast majority, work occasions a return to childhood, with few of its freedoms and most of its restrictions.

And, finally, Ehrenreich and Fraser force us to rethink the politics of poverty. Several reviewers have hailed *Nickel and Dimed* as a worthy successor to Michael Harrington's *The Other America*. The comparison is apt, but not for the reason these reviewers think. For Harrington discovered the poor, as he put it, "off the beaten track," rotting in the inner cities or along the rural peripheries. Though he discussed poverty's many guises and causes, he left the impression that people were poor because they did not fully participate in the economy. They were "the rejects of the affluent society" who "never had the right skills in the first place" or "lost them when the rest of the economy advanced." (In recent decades, William Julius Wilson has advanced a similar argument.) To understand the alien world of the poor required the talents of a modern-day Dickens, for only an artist could capture the "smell and texture" of people who "talk and think differently." Harrington's audience was the affluent society, the millions who had suddenly joined the middle class and forgotten that poverty existed. The only way to widen the circle of "the friends of the poor," he thought, was to describe and decry, in elegant and haunting prose, the poor's isolation, to remind everyone that though the poor were "other," they were still America.

But as Ehrenreich shows, today's poor are not the casualties of progress; they are its engines, or at least they grease the wheels that

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make the engines go. They clean the hotel rooms of globe-trotting capitalists. They ride bikes through wet city streets, delivering food to Wall Street lawyers burning the midnight oil. They are the temps and contingent workers who make profit margins soar. We are far closer to *The Road to Wigan Pier* than to *The Other America*. For George Orwell understood the poor as indispensable agents of an industrial economy, not as objects of compassion. "You could quite easily drive a car," he wrote, "across the north of England and never once remember that hundreds of feet below the road you are on the miners are hacking at the coal. Yet in a sense it is the miners who are driving your car forward." Ehrenreich reminds us that though ours is a high-tech, service economy, we still occupy Orwell's world, where the poor are not so much cast aside as denied the fruits of their labor. And, as Fraser shows, low-level workers aren't the only ones feeling the pinch of others' profit, so are the middle tiers of IBM, Drexel Burnham, and other corporate giants. Harrington's imagined audience of white-collar readers has largely disappeared. Professionals, done in by downsizing and stagnant wages, are too frightened of losing their own jobs to worry about anyone else's. Given the steady convergence of the lives of the poor and of the middle class, perhaps the time is ripe not for a war on poverty but for a war on the workplace—or, better yet, in the workplace. ●

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Standard-Bearer of the Right

Gary Gerstle

BEFORE THE STORM: BARRY GOLDWATER AND THE UNMAKING OF THE AMERICAN CONSENSUS
by Rick Perlstein
Hill and Wang, 2001 671 pp $30

NO POLITICAL movement in America these last twenty-five years has rivaled conservatism in appeal or influence. Everywhere one looks, conservative outlooks dominate public opinion: the market is celebrated as the most effective and just distributor of society's resources; government expenditures of any sort, other than for national defense, are condemned as ineffective or harmful to the Gross National Product; morality and social discipline are regarded as the only legitimate touchstones of social policy.

Despite conservatism's influence, historians of the twentieth-century United States have had a hard time giving this political movement its due. Libraries are choked with books on the history of liberalism and the left while the shelves on the history of conservatism are spare. In part this imbalance reflects historians' natural tendency to neglect the recent past and to focus instead on the more distant past, the first half of the twentieth century, when liberalism, in the form of Progressivism and the New Deal, really was the most important American political movement. This imbalance, however, also reflects the composition of liberal arts faculties at most colleges and universities, where liberals and leftists are abundant and conservatives are in short supply. Conservative intellectuals, by and large, have disdained the academic career path, preferring instead the work offered them outside universities in well-heeled conservative think tanks, where they tend to devote themselves to political philosophy and public policy rather than history.

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The mere fact that Rick Perlstein's *Before the Storm* devotes 516 pages to six years of the conservative movement (1958-1964) is itself a statement about this movement's importance. Perlstein has chosen his period well, for these were the years in which Republican conservatives embraced the enigmatic Barry Goldwater as their tribune, used him to take back the Republican Party from its moderate, Dewey-Eisenhower-Rockefeller wing, and challenged the dominant liberal creed of managed capitalism, racial integration, activist government, and a vigorous but restrained anticommunism. And although conservative Republicans suffered a humiliating defeat in 1964, the principles they had embraced and the organization they had built endured, soon to bring them local, state, and then national victories. Perlstein tells this story with energy and insight, and in lively prose.

Perlstein's book is not entirely successful, for he has two big ambitions that do not always mesh. He wants to recover a lost world of conservative Republicanism—the individuals first responsible for reinvigorating conservatism, the methods they used to spread their ideas, the issues and events that fueled their movement, and the internal fights that periodically threatened to lay them low. I found this part of the book to be fascinating, and so should plenty of *Dissent* readers, especially the veterans of leftist in-fighting who will be taken by Perlstein's portrait of a political community parallel to their own, populated, like the left, with talented and energetic true believers skilled at political intrigue and maneuvering and bent on revolution. Perlstein's other ambition is to write a comprehensive history of 1960s politics in the grand narrative style of a Theodore White. Perlstein's motivation here is admirable, in that he's trying to point us to a history of the 1960s that is about both the left and the right, the Democrats and the Republicans. Thus, significant parts of the book are devoted to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and to a chronicle of the 1964 election—the primaries, the conventions, the presidential campaign. While these sections on high politics are well told, interpretively they don't offer a story different enough from existing accounts, such as White's *The Making of the President, 1964*, to justify the space devoted to them.

In Perlstein's telling, two groups, roughly defined by generation, brought conservatism to life in the late 1950s. The first was a group of mostly self-made men born in the last years of the nineteenth century. Several, such as Clarence Manion, an Indiana native and law professor at the University of Notre Dame, started out in liberal circles in the Progressive-New Deal era but experienced a betrayal that transformed them politically and psychologically. Others in this group were small- to mid-sized businessmen and manufacturers who, in the 1940s and 1950s, were drawn to conservatism by their negative experience with the New Deal state. For them, the most visible manifestations of this state were the government-empowered unions that appeared at their workplaces and dared to tell them how to manage their enterprises. Toilet manufacturer Herbert V. Kohler of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, was an example of this kind; another was Robert Welch, a Massachusetts candy manufacturer who founded the John Birch Society in 1958; a third was Walter Knott, an Orange County restauranteur who made a fortune cultivating and selling "boysenberries," and turning Knott's Berry Farm into the region's second largest amusement park. It seems plausible to suggest, though Perlstein himself does not, that these businessmen lacked the influence on state policy that went to the General Motors-sized firms, so that they felt the heel of the state far more than its embrace. These men used their money to fund political campaigns, to purchase radio and television time, and to subsidize the costs of publishing conservative books and journals.

Ideologically, these conservatives can be described best as unilateralists: no one was going to tell them how to run their businesses (in relationship to workers), how to dispose of their wealth (in relationship to government taxes), whom to serve in their hotels and restaurants (in relationship to race), just as no one was going to tell America how to behave in the world, certainly not the Soviet Union, or some Southeast Asian band of guerrillas, or the United Nations. They saw themselves as indi-

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vidualists cut from the best American grain. Their individualism was so strong that it allowed them to ignore the profound interdependencies that governed their own lives. The westerners in their ranks, for example, seemed oblivious to the fact that their West would never have existed but for a large federal government pouring billions into western development. Many of them drew a straight line from unions to big government to collectivism to communism and the Soviet Union. They really believed that Walter Reuther and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were communists intent on destroying the United States and the freedom for which it stood.

Young, college-educated men (and an occasional woman) born in the 1920s and 1930s who had found their way to conservatism in the 1940s and 1950s made up the second pioneering group of conservatives. Some gathered around William F. Buckley and William Rusher at the *National Review*, founded in 1955, while others swarmed into Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), already twenty-four thousand strong in 1961 when Students for a Democratic Society was still only a glimmer in Tom Hayden's eye. They had had no firsthand encounters with unions or union leaders similar to those of the older group of conservative pioneers, but they had grown up surrounded by a New Deal Order of big government, bureaucracies, and extensive regulation of private activities that they did not like. Perlstein does not tell us enough about the ideas that motivated these young people—what they were reading about and talking about in universities in the 1940s and 1950s—but we can surmise that Friedrich A. Hayek's writings were high on their list as well as those by thinkers who criticized all sorts of collective regimes, ranging from the totalitarian to the social democratic, that allegedly suffocated individuality and strangled the human spirit.

In this sense, these young conservatives were animated by impulses similar to those that would soon energize a New Left, an affinity Perlstein shrewdly recognizes. Youth on both the left and right were rebelling against large institutions that seemed to want to program their lives and over which they had little or no control. Perlstein writes about one young Birchite whose "conversion to conservative politics came in a flash, when he realized that 'the man in the gray flannel suit was a devil in disguise.'" Many radicals, right and left, seem to have been influenced as well by existential patterns of thought, an influence discernible in their impatience with compromise, containment, and negotiation, and in their desire to live fully, authentically, even impulsively without external restraint. Sometimes this meant breaking away from political party organizations for the sake of standing up for the principle they held dear or of supporting the candidates that truly deserved their support. Other times this entailed taking on risks that most Americans found unacceptable. For the left, this came to mean putting one's "body on the line" through Freedom Rides, sit-ins at southern restaurants, and voting registration drives in Klan-dominated southern towns. For some among the youthful right, this engendered a rejection of a foreign policy that, in the hands of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy, appeared to them characterized by vacillation, uncertainty, and compromise. If the Soviets were as evil as Americans had been led to believe, then they had to be attacked and defeated, even if that meant using tactical nuclear missiles and risking a widespread nuclear war that might kill millions.

In his 1960 manifesto, *Conscience of a Conservative,* Barry Goldwater castigated the "craven fear of death" that had entered American consciousness. Such a stance, he argued, "repudiates everything that is courageous and honorable and dignified in the human being." Americans, instead, must be willing to embrace death and to declare to the world that "we would rather die than lose our freedom." It took the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and the assassination of JFK in 1963 to awaken Americans to the dangers of such death talk. Enough of it survived into the election year of 1964 to be used by the Democrats with devastating effectiveness against Goldwater, which is why Republican strategists banished it from their public discourse shortly thereafter.

PERLSTEIN IS more interested in the practice than the thought of politics, and thus he is drawn to political operatives far more

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than to political intellectuals. William Buckley is actually quite peripheral to his story. At its center is a little known "country boy from upstate New York," Frederick Clifton White, whom Perlstein credits both with building an extraordinary political machine that made the conservative right invincible within the Republican Party and with inventing the "southern strategy" that would ultimately bring the right national power. White, in Perlstein's telling, was not much of an ideologue and, but for a nasty encounter with New York State communists in the late 1940s, might have ended up working for Nelson Rockefeller, Kennedy, or Lyndon Johnson. But that encounter, in which communists denied White the state chairmanship of the left-leaning American Veterans' Committee (AVC) by spreading false rumors that White was having an affair with his secretary, triggered in White a deep antipathy toward the left. On the advice of veteran New York City unionist and anticommunist Gus Tyler, White paused long enough on his rightward journey to study the techniques that the communists had used against him. Soon, he was organizing his AVC chapter into cells of ten members, each cell ruled with an iron fist by a leader pledged to carry out White's wishes. White also learned from the communists how to manipulate parliamentary procedure to his advantage. He mastered the innumerable regulations that determined the selection of delegates to Democratic and Republican conventions in all the states and the arcane codes that governed elections in every municipality and county in the country. White was a brilliant organizer, or became one once he learned the art of Leninism.

After White conquered the AVC, his "syndicate" took over the Young Republican National Federation. Because of moderate Republicanism's strength in New York, White decided to ignore the Empire State and to build his control of the Young Republicans from a coalition of conservative members in the West, Midwest, and South. Once this strategy succeeded, White and his cronies began to think that a similar strategy might work in the Republican National Convention. It was a radical idea, for conventional wisdom held that no Republican candidate could get the nomination without the support of New York, still home to the GOP's largest delegation. White and others would prove that wisdom wrong and, in the process, pave the way for a conservative takeover of the GOP. Already in 1961 they were laying down plans for a move in 1964. And they already knew, too, whom they wanted to lead the charge—Barry Goldwater, senator from Arizona.

GOLDWATER WAS attractive both to the older businessmen who funded the New Right and the young turks who filled its YAF ranks. He was himself a middle-aged businessman, the scion of one of Arizona's leading mercantile families, who, before entering politics in 1949, ran the family's department stores. He liked to think of himself, as did Kohler and Knott, as a beneficent employer, paying his employees more money than he had to, giving them health and retirement benefits, and setting up a farm for employee recreation. But, like other conservative businessmen, he was a unilateralist to the core and loathed the New Deal and labor unions for limiting his managerial autonomy.

Goldwater's appeal to the young conservatives lay less in his approach to business and more in his take-charge style, his willingness to speak his mind even when it was impolitic to do so, and in his dreamy quest to free the human soul from the routine, the mundane, and the bureaucratic. He was a vigorous man, in the manner of Kennedy (or at least in the manner that Kennedy projected), who flew his own plane, zipped around Washington in his two-seat Thunderbird ("the dashboard built to look like a jet cockpit"), and shot the Colorado River rapids in a plywood boat. *Time* magazine lionized him in 1958 as the "tall, bronzed, lean-jawed, silver-haired man." Youthful supporters loved his determination to defend deep-felt principles, such as his refusal to compromise with Soviet evil for the sake of peaceful coexistence, and were sent into delirium by his declaration that "extremism in the name of liberty is no vice."

Goldwater's dreaminess is more elusive. Occasionally, Goldwater talked about his desire to "restore inner meaning to every man's life in a time too often rushed, too often obsessed by petty needs and material greeds." More commonly, Goldwater expressed these

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sentiments in actions rather than words. Much to his handlers' dismay, he refused to be programmed to say the same thing at every campaign stop. At crucial moments, he appeared distracted, interrupting an important political engagement to talk with his HAM radio buddies and fleeing a boring planning session at the 1964 Republican National Convention to buzz San Francisco's Cow Palace in a rented airplane. Long fascinated with Indian folklore, he gave Navajo names to his desert house in Arizona and his 1964 campaign plane, sported a tattoo from an Arizona tribe on his left hand, and conversed in Navajo with Arizona friends.

Was Goldwater simply a restless aristocrat, a man accustomed since boyhood to having every wish indulged by wealthy parents and finding nothing really satisfying or fulfilling? Or did his inner self have Allen Ginsburg or Carlos Castaneda type tendencies that compelled him to rage against Moloch and seek spirituality in the world of Indian lore? Even if the answers to these questions are not clear, Goldwater emerges from Perlstein's pages as an intriguing and complex figure. The qualities that made him charming and interesting as an individual weakened him as a presidential candidate and ensured that he would be a transitional figure: one who played a critical role in bringing together different constituencies of the New Right and gaining for this movement national attention, but one, too, who did not possess the skills to survive, let alone flourish, in the national arena. But, then, Ronald Reagan was already waiting in the wings.

The White-Goldwater insurrection in the Republican Party would have amounted to little in the end had it not been for the upheaval in race relations that *Brown v. Board of Education* had unleashed in 1954. White southerners began leaving the party, their rate of exit accelerating in 1964 as a result of the Democrats' passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act. In 1960, significant groups within the Republican Party still prided themselves on being the party of Lincoln. By 1964, the party had all but severed itself from Lincoln's legacy, embracing the Dixiecrat creed of states' rights and Jim Crow instead.

This did not mean that all conservatives had begun to define themselves in terms of maintaining white supremacy. Many on the right continued to locate the principal evil in the world not in terms of the drive for racial equality but in terms of communism, unions, and collectivist ideologies (including American liberalism). Some who opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declared that they didn't want to keep blacks down; rather, they just did not want some big government in Washington telling ordinary white people in small southern towns whom they had to employ, whom they had to serve in restaurants, and who was going to sit next to their kids at school. But even if we grant legitimacy to such a stance (which is hard to do), it is still sobering to observe how unmoved most conservatives were by the evil that racial prejudice had unleashed in America and Europe.

As conservatives surveyed the twentieth century, they saw only one world-shattering event, and that was the Bolshevik Revolution. The century's other world-shattering event, Hitler's rise to power and the destruction of European Jewry that accompanied it, didn't seem to register in their consciousness at all. Were I (or anyone else) to write a book about liberalism and the left to parallel Perlstein's for the years 1958-1964, significant parts of it would have to be devoted to how a reckoning with Nazism and the racial genocide that it had unleashed impelled American progressives to mobilize against religious prejudice and racism in the United States. Yet, almost nowhere in Perlstein's more than six hundred well-researched pages do we encounter a conservative visibly upset about Nazi atrocities or determined to do something about American racial injustice. These issues simply did not move the right, which may explain why the cast of conservative hundreds that marches across Perlstein's pages includes, by my count, one black and three-and-a-half Jews (more on the half-Jew in a moment).

Historically, of course, the American right had included a strongly anti-Semitic constituency that, as recently as the 1930s and 1940s and under the leadership of such men as Father Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith, blamed America's ills on the Jews or on the "Judeo-Bolsheviks" who sprang from their ranks. William Buckley did seek to deny these Jew-hating conservatives a voice in the New Right that

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he was attempting to assemble in the pages of the *National Review*. Even so, his journal never committed itself in the 1950s or early 1960s to a searching examination of the evil wrought by anti-Semitism in Europe or racial hatred in the United States nor to an exploration of the roots of these ideologies. And, to many on the right, it remained tempting to excuse Nazism as a lamentable but understandable response to the greater evil posed by bolshevism and to blame America's racial troubles on the destructive agitation of American, especially Jewish and black, communists.

THE HALF-JEW in the New Right was Goldwater himself. In a strict sense, he was not a Jew at all, for his father had converted to Episcopalianism and married a Protestant woman. But Goldwater's role model had always been his Uncle Morris, founder of Arizona's Democratic Party and longtime mayor of Prescott, who had never relinquished his Jewish identity. Goldwater considered himself half Jewish, which may explain why he, in contrast to most of his conservative buddies, was easily angered by anti-Semitic and anti-black prejudice. He successfully fought to end racial discrimination in the Phoenix public schools and the Arizona National Guard. He forced the Phoenix Country Club to accept his friend Harry Rosenzweig as a member at a time (1949) when it did not accept Jews. He wanted to eliminate racial prejudice and racial segregation from American society, the South included, though he believed that ending apartheid through federal government intervention was the wrong way to do it. He did vote against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but with considerable anguish. When he rose in the Senate Chamber to defend his vote, Goldwater read a speech "rapidly, tonelessly, head down," conveying shame or regret about what he was doing.

Goldwater, however, was not enough a man of principle to refuse to lead the racist coalition mobilizing around his candidacy. In 1964, he did not renounce the support of George Wallace and other white supremacists whom Goldwater had despised. And, during the last weeks of the 1964 campaign, Goldwater moved further to the right, giving a televised speech on civil rights in which he effectively repudiated his earlier commitment to integration. In order for America to remain free, Goldwater now argued, those who wanted to preserve their segregationist, white supremacist way of life had to be guaranteed the right to do so. A key adviser (and speech writer) on this matter was William Rehnquist, then a young Arizona attorney. Rehnquist had never had a soft spot for integration: when Goldwater had supported antidiscrimination ordinances in Phoenix, Rehnquist had opposed him. But now Goldwater was ready to follow Rehnquist's lead. So were large swaths of the American electorate. Indeed, Perlstein suggests that Goldwater would have won considerably more votes in 1964 had he been willing to push the race issue to the limit. This lesson would not be lost on Goldwater's successors.

Perlstein is critical of conservative opposition to the civil rights bill, but in an understated way. He has made a special effort to keep his own political views, which seem to lie left-of-center, far away from his history of conservatism. Indeed, Perlstein is admirably objective, and this has helped him to write a scrupulously fair-minded book that should appeal to the right as much as to the left. That is an impressive accomplishment. Nevertheless, it is also true that some chroniclers of conservatism's past need to hold these earlier generations of activists accountable for their misdeeds. Imagine what America would look like today if Rehnquist, Wallace, and their allies had won in 1964 and gotten the Civil Rights Act defeated or overturned. For conservatives themselves to explore this matter in an honest way, they probably have to be challenged to do so by a free-thinking member of their own movement. That African-Americans now hold prominent positions in a conservative Republican administration suggests that we are getting closer to the day when that might happen. I look forward to such a development, although I suspect that the current chief justice will not be making his own amends anytime soon. ●

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Societies of Mutual Isolation

Benjamin Kunkel

BLINDNESS
by José Saramago
translated by Giovanni Pontiero
Harcourt Brace, 1998 293 pp $22

ALL THE NAMES
by José Saramago
translated by Margaret Jull Costa
Harcourt Brace, 2000 238 pp $24

THE TWENTIETH century was the era of comprehensive social organization, usually undertaken by a nation-state. In this sense, it brought to a culmination one of the main trends of modernity: Max Weber identified it as increasing "rationalization," the Frankfurt School referred to it as "the administered life," and Michel Foucault described it by suggesting that the sovereign's old right to decree death was now complemented by an infinitely ramifying "power over life." No matter the name, this new power could extend anywhere, including into the last redoubts of privacy. It was Soviet Russia that gave meaning and special ugliness to talk about the engineering of human souls.

No one should forget the quiet social democratic victories of the age. For the first time in history—to take just one example—Swedish physicians could not determine a child's social class on the basis of that child's state of health. But the nightmare images are bound to come first to mind. And many of the most frightening images of comprehensive order—the acme of which is totalitarianism—come not from political philosophers or from totalitarians themselves, but from a few novels: Franz Kafka's *Trial*, Eugeny Zamyatin's *We*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*. Whether it was someone telling lies about Joseph K., or "the mathematically perfect life of the United State" (Zamyatin), or a bio-engineered caste system of Alphas and Betas, or the ubiquity of Big Brother, all of these visions shared a family resemblance. In each, unaccountable power had come to penetrate virtually the whole of life. There was scarcely any ability to be alone: both Winston Smith in *1984* and D-503, the narrator, the I, of Zamyatin's *We*, become dissidents simply by virtue of keeping a diary. Whatever the dystopia's local color, it was a "world of total integration," as Irving Howe wrote in a small brilliant survey of the genre, that would seize and then incorporate you.

Zamyatin and Orwell may not have speeded the fall of the Soviet Union; Kafka's great novel, which, as Primo Levi said, "predicted the time when it was a crime simply to be a Jew," may not have delayed the Holocaust by a day; and Huxley's vision of a smooth bio-apartheid may yet be realized in the rich countries. But all the same it is somewhat heartening that among the countless "volumes of disenchantment" (Howe again) that the failure of utopia produced, three or four novels achieved such intellectual currency that their circulation has been a small but real defense against some of the worst of our possible futures.

One of the last and best of such novels was J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*. This 1983 novel is set in a South Africa of civil war and concentration camps, one that happily never came to pass. Coetzee excels at depicting the "coloured" Michael K's desire to live free of categorization and control, hiding out from the world in a hole in the ground and sustaining himself on his pumpkin patch. But Michael K's need to be left alone, literally to tend his own garden, verges on the autistic, and Coetzee seems thereby to illustrate, deliberately or not, one of the limitations of his chosen genre. The prison literature that is the

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dystopian novel naturally lays a heavy emphasis on escape, and it postpones all other discussions, as Coetzee writes, "for a day when we are not running away from the police."

Now the twentieth century is over. If we take up Eric Hobsbawm's suggestion of a short twentieth century, it ended ten years ago, in 1991. Although Big Brother, like the devil himself, will never retire, he is in retreat. And if throughout the twentieth century Russia embodied the hypertrophy of state power, now it is the exemplary sufferer of an opposite condition: the abdication of the state, the collapse of infrastructure, the nullity of the law. Russia is not unique in this way either. As John Gray writes in *False Dawn*, his polemic against neoliberal economics, we have left behind "an age in which totalitarian states were the chief threat to freedom and prosperity. Today human and social well-being is being threatened chiefly by collapsed or enfeebled states." We have also witnessed the decline of social democracy, in which societies increasingly withdraw protection from and refuse awareness of a growing minority of citizens.

A NEW AGE wants new imaginations, and in this light the Portuguese novelist José Saramago's achievement becomes especially striking. Saramago, who joined the Portuguese Communist Party in 1968, when it was still outlawed, has been a political novelist from the start, each of his first six novels skirmishing with Portuguese history. Saramago's politics can be playful or grave. In *The Stone Raft*, he whimsically detaches the Iberian peninsula from the rest of Europe, just as fascism had done, but this time, so he explained in his 1998 Nobel Lecture, in order for it to float "South to help balance the world, as compensation for [Europe's] former and its present colonial abuses." In *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, the dead poet Fernando Pessoa returns from the cemetery to visit one of his own creations, the alter ego Ricardo Reis, and the two trace arabesques of melancholy speculation on the air, Reis perfecting his aloofness and passivity while all around him—the novel is set in 1936—fascism assembles its world.

Not until the 1990s did Saramago deterritorialize his work, as an academic critic might say. Written from the geopolitical peripheries of Portugal and communism, the novels published in the nineties are nevertheless innocent of all maps and as universal as anything in contemporary fiction. The events of *Blindness* and *All the Names* merely happen *somewhere*, which, Saramago seems to imply, should be all the claim on our attention they require. If the twentieth century ended in 1991, then Saramago has a good claim to being the greatest and, what is more, the most necessary political novelist of the twenty-first century, so far.

But this century, that century—it hardly matters. Everything depends on whether a book like *Blindness* is looking backward or ahead. Many readers saw this novel as an abstract of twentieth-century atrocities, and, true, the incarceration of victims of a contagious "white blindness" in a disused mental asylum cannot help but recall the uses to which elementary schools and sports stadiums and churches (not to speak of the specially constructed facilities of the Nazis) have been put by various regimes. But *Blindness* affirms the very thing that Saramago's precursors in political allegory dreaded and wished to deny: the wholeness of society. For Saramago, blindness is a type of illumination, and what the white blindness, "like the sun shining through mist," reveals is the dependence of people on one another and the necessity of society's deliberate organization. Before long a gang of thugs and extortionists has taken over the asylum, reviving the old question: socialism or barbarism?

In any case, the internment of the blind points up not so much the evil as the futility of quarantine. The internees escape the asylum when the soldiers guarding them also go blind, the epidemic proving, as in Camus's *The Plague*, that no one really lives apart from the others. Saramago possesses such authority as a writer because, in spite of his outlandish conceits, his tone is always sane and capacious, at ease with grandeur and banality, and as happy to make use of a serviceable cliché as to coin a new and startling image. He is a writer to quote at length, since all manner of detail and comment join in the easy democracy of his long sentences. Here is the doctor's wife—no one being given a name in this novel—returning from a looted supermarket in a rainstorm:

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> In a downpour like this, which is almost becoming a deluge, you would expect people to be taking shelter, waiting for the weather to improve. But this is not the case, there are blind people everywhere gaping up at the heavens, slaking their thirst, storing up water in every nook and cranny of their bodies, and others who are somewhat more far-sighted, and above all sensible, hold up buckets, bowls and pans, and raise them to the generous sky, clearly God provides the cloud according to the thirst. The possibility had not yet occurred to the doctor's wife that not so much as a drop of the precious liquid was coming from the taps in the houses, this is the drawback of civilization, we are so used to the convenience of piped water brought into our homes, and forget that for this to happen there have to be people to open and close distribution valves, water towers and pumps that require electrical energy, computers to regulate the deficits and administer the reserves, and all of these operations require the use of one's eyes. Eyes are also needed to see this picture, a woman laden with plastic bags, going along a rain-drenched street, amidst rotting litter and human and animal excrement, cars and trucks abandoned any old way, blocking the main thoroughfare, some of the vehicles with their tires already surrounded by grass, and the blind, the blind, the blind, open-mouthed and staring up at the white sky, it seems incredible that rain should fall from such a sky.

This is at once biblical and humbly municipal, and indeed Saramago, atheist and socialist, wants us to understand that any portion of heaven that humanity enjoys is partly a matter to be hashed out in tedious meetings of the city council.

Blindness is in this sense a plea for order, an illustration of our mutual dependence on each other, an interdependence that life in a neoliberal society conceals. Saramago has done something remarkable: his recent novels have reversed the terms of another generation and, in this post-totalitarian age, made a novelistic case for the virtues of order and information, when not long ago these would have sounded like the watchwords of the police.

THE NEW NOVEL, *All the Names*, beautifully translated by Margaret Jull Costa, is a milder and, at first sight, more modest work than *Blindness*. But it is audacious enough—a fantasy of surveillance. Imagine this plot in the context of fifty years ago: without authorization, a lowly clerk at the Central Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths begins to investigate the life of a private and obscure citizen. Senhor José is the clerk, a solitary bachelor who, lonelier than he knows, passes his free time collecting "clippings from newspapers and magazines containing news and photos of famous people purely because they are famous." One night he steals into the Central Registry to inspect the certificates of these celebrities, in order to confirm that they really have lived and died, and in the process he accidentally retrieves the certificate of a nobody, a non-celebrity, "the unknown woman."

This launches Senhor José on a quest to find, and find out about, this soul lost sight of by celebrity culture and the information age. The genius of Saramago's plot is that as Senhor José increasingly resorts to illegal and clandestine methods, he becomes more and more afraid of being found out himself. The novel becomes "a question of one invisible being seeking out another," and gradually Senhor José, touchingly clumsy, begins to suspect that his boss, the Registrar, may know what he is up to—and approve.

The tone of the book is light and sly, but for all his atheism Saramago is the most Christian of contemporary writers and what he has produced is nothing less than a version of the Last Judgment, of a perfect and final accounting. Ultimately it is necessary for Senhor José to visit the General Cemetery, its façade "the twin sister of the Central Registry façade," to determine whether death may have beat him to the unknown woman. Because he enters the cemetery at the gate, where the most ancient dead are buried, our clerk must walk through three thousand years of monuments, the earliest made of "dolmens, cromlechs and menhirs," to the freshly disturbed earth of the newest graves, where the cemetery abuts a new suburb of the living. Ever the clerk, José considers how much more efficient it would be "if the dead had been buried standing up, side by side, in serried ranks, like soldiers at attention"—waiting, one presumes, for their names to be called.

The afterlife of information may be the only survival we can hope for; meanwhile, the burden of Saramago's tale is to conjure up the sto-

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ries left out of the news, the individuals excluded from the state's calculations, the neighbors left unknown in a society of mutual isolation. For this reason the story is generalized: there are no proper names in *All the Names* but the one, José, which the book would bear anyway, since it belongs to the author.

Of course the novel is not only a political one. Saramago's allegories have a richness of overdetermined significance that places him more in Kafka's company than in that of Orwell and the others. But what is unlike Kafka, and all of modernism, is Saramago's lack of eccentricity. Nothing seems to distinguish his perspective but its wisdom. He doesn't stand at a slight angle to the universe, as we value the modernists for having done, but looks at it straight on. Among the things he has faced most squarely are the new threats to the commonweal, those that come from ignorance and neglect rather than surveillance and capture.

As Elias Canetti notes in *Crowds and Power*, the awesome and frightful capacity of the hand is not only to be able to hold fast, but "the ability to let go of something instantly." Kafka, Orwell, and the others, have schooled several generations of readers in the terrors of capture, of being held and then crushed. But it can be just as fatal to be let go of—as deadly to be abandoned as to be hunted. Not that we do not need to keep having the old nightmares. Their validity is permanent, something that José Saramago himself—if we are to judge by his friendship with Fidel Castro—appears not sufficiently to appreciate. It is also possible to have the worst of both worlds, for us to build new prisons as we trim the welfare rolls or for China to combine the features of totalitarianism and neoliberalism. But it is the sins of omission that we have a harder time imagining, after the era just past, and this is where Saramago comes in. Writing in the face of the global market, he wants us to see, as in *Blindness*, that the most solitary and apparently independent of us in fact depend on the invisible cooperation of the greatest number of others; and to remind us, as in *All the Names*, of those many people whom an information age fails even to baptize. A political novelist of our time can hardly do more. ●

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Back to the Future

Stephen Pimpare

FIGHTING POVERTY WITH VIRTUE:
MORAL REFORM AND
AMERICA'S URBAN POOR 1825-2000
by Joel Schwartz
Indiana University Press, 2000 480 pp $39.95

CONSERVATIVES for some time now have been urging a return to virtue and morality as a key to resolving social ills. The latest voice in this chorus, which includes Gertrude Himmelfarb, Marvin Olasky, Lawrence Mead, Mickey Kaus, and Charles Murray, is Joel Schwartz, who brings us *Fighting Poverty with Virtue*.

Schwartz recommends that we look to the charity reformers of the nineteenth century for responses to contemporary urban poverty. As Josephine Shaw Lowell or Charles Loring Brace did then, we might now try to reduce poverty by "remoralizing" the unemployed to the "three cardinal virtues" of "diligence, sobriety and thrift." That is, we should teach the poor to work harder, drink less, and save more. This is a very old argument. In the thirteenth century, for instance, Humbert of Romans cited the "habitual idleness, debauchery and drunkenness" of the poor as their chief failing.

Charity reformers of the nineteenth cen-

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tury believed that cash aid to poor people was dangerous, even cruel: it fostered dependency, reduced incentives to work (and thereby caused poverty), and offered false hope for a better future. Relief should be given sparely, if at all, and administered only by private agencies to reduce political patronage and indiscriminate giving to the "unworthy" poor. Victorian reformers sought, they said, to reduce the cost of relief, too: private charity could offer better support (providing moral uplift in lieu of cash) and do it more cheaply and efficiently than public agencies. Besides, they argued, public relief inhibits the private spirit of giving. Finally, and most important, they wanted to ensure that poor relief remained charity, not a right, and that cash would be offered only as a last resort. "Almsgiving and dole giving are hurtful," wrote Lowell, a founder of the New York Charity Organization Society (COS) and one of Schwartz's central characters, "therefore they are not charitable." The COS motto was "not alms, but a friend."

These Victorian-era reformers often measured their success not by reductions in poverty but by reductions in pauperism—charting with pride from year to year in their annual reports how many fewer poor they served than the year before, boasting when they could claim responsibility for a city reducing or completely abolishing all public cash relief to poor people, as many did late in the century. Some were especially proud of their successful efforts to end "street-begging." For a while, reformers throughout the nation proclaimed their efforts a success. Relief was abolished or turned over to private agencies, and the poor, reformers claimed, suffered no ill effects.

This should all sound oddly familiar to anyone acquainted with contemporary debates about welfare reform or with the rationale behind the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. It is all there, from the insistence that public relief is corrupt and inefficient, while private (especially religious) agencies are more effective and less costly, to the warning that welfare itself breeds poverty, profligacy, and dependence. It is not money, the poor need, but *morality*. We, too, now boast of our reforms' success by noting that relief rolls nationwide have been cut in half.

But the reformers of the nineteenth century ultimately failed, as they themselves admitted and Schwartz concedes. And we too, by some measures, have failed.

IT IS TRUE that since 1994 we have cut relief rolls in half while reducing child poverty rates, even among African-American children, who have suffered particularly "stubborn" poverty. Many women, formerly on relief, are now working, and some are earning more than they were as welfare recipients. By those measures—fewer "dependent" women and fewer poor children—we might call the reforms of 1996 a success and argue that we have bested our nineteenth-century counterparts. But the story is more complicated. Although more poor women are working, between 40 percent and 60 percent of those who leave (or are pushed off) the welfare rolls are not at any given time. And besides, women have historically cycled on and off the rolls, moving in and out of the workforce; this is hardly an achievement of the reform legislation. Many of those who do find work earn wages at or below the official poverty line in jobs without benefits, and many are materially poorer than they were while receiving relief. A lower percentage of poor children are receiving food stamps, fewer eligible families are receiving Medicaid, and 400,000 more poor children lived in deep poverty in 1997 than in 1995. The number of children in foster care climbed to 547,000 in 1999 from 483,000 in 1995. Some Head Start providers have reported increased signs of abuse and neglect among children of workfare participants. The number of people seeking food at soup kitchens and food pantries rose some 17 percent last year alone, while demand for emergency shelter increased by 15 percent. Homelessness in New York City has reached an all-time high, exceeding even the "crisis" years of the 1980s. And this was in a "booming" economy.

Although late-nineteenth-century reformers initially helped achieve cuts in local relief rolls, by the dawn of the twentieth century most had established their own relief funds and "sunk into a sea of almsgiving," while urging that the government intervene to do what private charity alone simply could not. They dis-

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covered, after regular contact with many poor people, that relief wasn't a cause of their poverty, and that, in fact, relief could better their lives. These reformers came to understand something that Schwartz mentions but fails to appreciate, yet it is a constant feature of charity reformers' accounts of this tumultuous era: employment was often seasonal, and most of those who sought relief from these reform societies, even those ultimately deemed "undeserving," worked for part of each year. They did not lack diligence, they lacked work. In fact, by century's end, the New York COS formally ceased distinguishing between the "deserving" and the "undeserving," giving the distinction up as meaningless.

Part of the return to poor relief after this experiment with abolition was practical. With cash relief rarely available, but cities still afraid to completely abandon the growing ranks of the "dangerous classes," they resorted to offering aid in the workhouse or the poorhouse. Both, historically, are always more expensive than mere relief. As one reformer observed in 1874, "there is not a State nor a city wherein the cost of public out-door relief [cash aid] exceeds that of in-door relief [the poorhouse or workhouse]."

Abolishing relief in the nineteenth century proved to be expensive and ineffective, and instead of urging moral reform (though this theme was, to be sure, rarely far from the surface) many charity reformers began to turn their attention to housing reforms, workplace, health and safety legislation, and in Lowell's case, even helping workers unionize. Reformer Charles Henderson could write by 1894 that "the first duty of charity is to secure higher wages, shorter hours, [and] better physical and moral conditions of labor."

Yet here we are again. In the wake of what some have called welfare repeal in the 1990s, reform in our time has been expensive, too. Four billion dollars more is being spent under Temporary Aid to Needy Families than was projected under Aid to Families with Dependent Children, notes Lawrence Mead, although less is actually going to poor people and more is going to not-for-profit training or service providers or to private corporations such as welfare-to-work specialist Maximus. (Some block grant money is simply being spent by states on budget items that have nothing to do with TANF.) By 2002, more will be spent nationwide in the name of welfare on contracts and services than on cash relief, says the Center for Law and Social Policy. We have not cut welfare spending: we have shifted money from poor families to "service providers." We have privatized much of welfare. Yet, as Eyal Press observed in the *American Prospect*, there is virtually no scholarly evidence to support the claim that private and religious organizations do more for less. As ex-White House faith-based director John DiIulio's former colleague Bryon Johnson told the *New York Times*, "We've created an office out of anecdotes."

Nor is there any evidence, for that matter, that moral reform is effective. Economist Stephen Ziliak studied nineteenth-century charity reformers in Indianapolis. These "friendly visitors" went to poor people's homes to teach them the virtues that Schwartz espouses as the solution to poverty (and to decide if they were worthy of relief). After studying reformers' case files, which tracked individuals and families over the course of many years, Ziliak found that visiting the poor and educating them to the virtues had no measurable impact on their success in finding employment. This will not surprise those who have operated work-readiness or life skills courses for people on welfare to help make them more "employable." There is no contemporary evidence that such efforts achieve more than, at best, short-term, temporary employment successes.

But in the absence of evidence that moral suasion or cutting relief works, why have we repeated this one-hundred-year-old formula? Because there is more to the assault on poor relief than the celebration of diligence and temperance (or marriage and chastity, for that matter). Relief has economic effects, too, and so does the relief reform that often comes in the wake of these morality plays, as Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward long argued. There is truth to the claim made by Victorians old and new that welfare fosters "dependence" and discourages work. Relief, especially if sufficiently generous, has effects upon work effort; in some ways, that's the point. Dependence comes in many forms, and many women

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on AFDC chose to be dependent upon the state rather than dependent upon a man or a labor market that accorded them little value. For some women, and some of those few men who could even get relief, public assistance offered them more security for, say, child rearing, than any other practicable option available to them. Relief is some small measure of power, of freedom even. As one reformer said about the harsh depression winter of 1873-1874, "Labor was in a struggle with capital against the lowering of prices. Charity assisted labor in the combat. The soup-kitchens and relief associations of various names became thronged with mechanics [who had refused to accept a reduction in their wages]. . . .The whole settlement of the labor question was postponed by the over-generous charity of the city."

Schwartz and the New Victorians argue that the moral response to the dilemma of poverty is to demonstrate to an employer a willingness to work harder and longer for less pay than any other prospective employee. (This, one story goes, is why Irish immigrants achieved gains that similarly situated blacks did not.) What troubles so many about poor relief, then and now, is that it makes it possible to decline this bargain. Without cash relief, however, which many cities contracted then much as we have recently done, the choice is more limited: work or starve. (Or, as Schwartz would have it, move to where it is cheaper and work is more plentiful or get credit, borrow money, move in with family or friends—do anything but seek pauperizing relief.) Why this is moral or virtuous is unclear. Schwartz assumes that all work, any work, is better than relief, but even Lowell would eventually concede that "work could, under certain conditions, degrade the poor as well as elevate them."

Moral reform movements may, then, obscure an economic campaign whose aim is to compel labor at any price. Perhaps this is why Schwartz fails to offer us any evidence—beyond what he terms the "commonsensical"—that these cardinal virtues are even relevant to a discussion of poverty. "It is absurd," he writes by way of castigating settlement house leader Jane Addams and Piven and Cloward, "to suppose that recommending the virtues of diligence, sobriety, thrift and familial responsibility to the poor is somehow an attack upon them." In one sense, this could be a fair criticism—after all, I myself have been known to be diligent; I require sobriety in a taxi driver; and I admire thrift, especially when I lack it. To suggest that all people, poor ones included, given the world in which we live, might profit from working harder, saving more, and drinking less is on its face reasonable enough.

But if we concede to Schwartz this much, he and the other Victorian revivalists could at least then concede that it is also absurd to propose that by imposing these virtues upon poor people (who he has not even demonstrated lack them) poverty would somehow disappear or even decline. As noted above, many women who now work instead of living "on the dole" are poorer than before. Diligence has not enriched them materially, and there is no reason to believe that they have been enriched morally, though Mead and Kaus and others would surely disagree. But we need not devote too much energy to disputing these assertions, for Schwartz himself admits that the moral reform movement of the late nineteenth century was largely a failure. "It failed," he writes, because "perhaps it was not education in the virtues but structural reforms—coupled with, and made possible by, the tremendous expansion of the economy—that were most important in lifting millions of Americans out of poverty in this century."

If moral education wasn't what was most required in the late nineteenth century, and it was economic growth and government intervention in the market that reduced poverty throughout most of the twentieth century, why would moralizing be effective now?

Well, he argues, because the presence today of an elaborate welfare state ameliorates most structurally induced poverty, leaving us, finally, a world in which the poverty that remains can only be from moral failure. Set aside the fact that the American welfare state is hardly elaborate. Even if it once were, we have been chipping away at those protections since the 1970s (we do well to remember that social service cutbacks began under Jimmy Carter, not Ronald Reagan). The result is a

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familiar litany: increased poverty and inequality, decreasing family wages and unionization, and so on. Using Schwartz's own logic, to remedy this new post-1970s poverty we should not be cutting benefits, pushing people into the low-wage labor market (and as Nobel economist Robert Solow tells us, depressing wages even among higher earners), and proselytizing about upright behavior. Rather, we should be re-establishing those social protections we have cut in the name of efficiency, cost savings, international competitiveness, reducing dependency, and, yes, compassionate conservatism.

The attempt at remoralization that Schwartz recommends was omnipresent in the debate over welfare reform and will surely be back with us soon when the welfare block grant, child care block grant and the food stamp program are up for re-authorization in 2002. As we look forward, we might look back, too, as Schwartz urges, and remind our friends who are nostalgic for another era that we have tried their prescription, and the result was the welfare state they so loathe. ●

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Making Books

Vanessa Mobley

THE BUSINESS OF BOOKS: HOW INTERNATIONAL CONGLOMERATES TOOK OVER PUBLISHING AND CHANGED THE WAY WE READ
by André Schiffrin
Verso Books, 2000 181 pp $23

BOOK BUSINESS: PUBLISHING PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE
by Jason Epstein
Norton, 2001 188 pp $21.95

THE BOOK business has never occupied the American imagination the way the more glamorous entertainment industries have. But thanks in part to the publication of two memoirs by leading editor-publishers, publishing is getting another shot at describing that particular breach between the ideal and the possible in which all those who profit off ideas must operate.

André Schiffrin, former managing director of Pantheon Books and now publisher of the New Press, and Jason Epstein, founder of Anchor Books and longtime editor in chief of Random House, are successors to the golden age of publishing. Although not exactly contemporaries, both were young men after the Second World War and before the corporate consolidation of the esteemed New York family firms, many of which bore their owners' name. Schiffrin and Epstein entered a publishing world that was in flux but still thriving.

The war proved a boon to the book business; brisk sales of maps, atlases, and books about Europe and the war led to increased sales of other genres. This period, too, marked the first time that publishers began operating as real businesses—aided by a national concentration of interest and civic energy, publishers began to take their first cues from the marketplace about how to tailor their books not just to an undifferentiated mass of readers, but to specific markets.

Perhaps the best example of this effort was the Council on Books in Wartime. Founded and made up of several prominent publishers, the council shipped more than thirty-five million books selected specifically for the women and men of the armed forces and unavailable to civilians. Tailored to fit into the pockets on

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a soldier's uniform, they included popular and classic novels and, to a lesser extent, nonfiction works edited by army and navy officials. It was a time when returning soldiers, many of them beneficiaries of the GI Bill, flooded the ranks of book buyers, elevating what was perhaps America's mean level of literary interest into something both nobler and less cash poor.

The council's story serves as a reference point for both Schiffrin's and Epstein's entry into the business. Having inherited the promise of a country of engaged citizen book buyers, Schiffrin and, to a lesser extent Epstein, tell the story of the withering of the once vital marketplace for books and ideas and what it has meant to an industry that feeds off idealism. Both Schiffrin's *The Business of Books: How International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read* and Epstein's *Book Business: Publishing Past Present and Future* are industry memoirs, with the mix of nostalgia, regret, and high-minded self-congratulation common in personal memoirs.

Schiffrin and Epstein draw from the same well of publishing myth to establish their very different reputations in the industry: Schiffrin's is that of the noble heretic, railing against dereliction of intellectual responsibilities in favor of the profit motive and Epstein's is of the ceaseless innovator who achieved the trifecta of publishing—the approval of his peers and authors, the attention of the reading public, and the satisfaction of his investors.

SCHIFFRIN'S BOOK is also a polemic against the corrosive influence of international conglomerates on U.S. publishing. To understand his enmity, one must appreciate his biography. Schiffrin's father, Jacques, a Russian Jew living in France, founded his own publishing house, Editions de La Pleiade, with help from his friend André Gide, who translated a number of Russian classics into French. Pleiade, whose mission was to make affordable editions of the classics, was so successful that Gallimard (where Jacques Schiffrin had worked until he was drafted into the French army) bought it in 1936. Shortly after the French defeat in 1940, Jacques Schiffrin was fired. His dear Pleiade remained in the hands of Gallimard, which, according to his son, obeyed the imperative of Aryanization over loyalty to its employees. In 1942, Jacques Schiffrin, his wife, and son André, emigrated to New York, and Jacques resumed his work as a publisher, issuing French editions of resistance writing for the small exile community. Soon, he sold foreign licenses for these editions, and the business, which he established with capital raised from friends, joined forces with Kurt Wolff's Pantheon Books.

After the war, Pantheon achieved considerable commercial success, first with an English translation of *Zen and the Art of Archery* and then with the Bollingen series, which made available in English the work of Carl Jung and prominent Jungian theorists. The newly profitable house was sold, after the elder Schiffrin's untimely death, to Bennett Cerf, who a few years earlier had taken Random House public and, flush with cash, purchased Alfred A. Knopf, another house known for its equally distinguished list of literature in translation.

André Schiffrin's first stint in publishing was at New American Library (NAL), a paperback house that published a mixture of what Schiffrin, characteristically, calls the "lowbrow commercialism of best-sellers" and highbrow offerings, including "instant books" on, for instance, the McCarthy trials as well as the Mentor series introducing academic work such as Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*. To this consumer-friendly list, with average prices of twenty to thirty-five cents, Schiffrin added the Signet Classic series, offering the equivalent of the Modern Library's selection of English-language, and lesser-known foreign classics in pulp paperback editions to a broader, and in great measure classroom, audience.

Schiffrin's short tenure at the NAL was his first and last foray into traditional publishing. He joined Pantheon shortly after it had been acquired by Random House (and shortly after his father's death). Understanding, perhaps from his father's example, the need to maintain control over his contributions to a larger corporate entity, Schiffrin quickly set out to establish his independence within the company. Schiffrin's description of his years at the helm of Pantheon, before Random's acquisition by RCA, are somewhat idyllic. Pantheon remained profitable, if not wildly so, through

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a combination of shrewd academic publishing, much of it by way of Europe, and new best-sellers from Pantheon's backlist authors—a formula that afforded Schiffrin the luxury of satisfying profit expectations without sacrificing editorial freedom. In spite of this, Schiffrin wears as a badge of honor his distinct disinterest in the bottom line.

> There had been years when Pantheon earned only a small amount but, as Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer's successor Bob Bernstein was often to insist, at no time did we lose any money out of pocket. That is, Pantheon covered its own costs even if it did not always contribute the required amount to Random's expenditures, a sum of which we were never informed and could not negotiate.

Schiffrin doesn't ask the crucial question: could Pantheon have survived in any form other than as part of a larger corporate entity such as Random House, the modern day equivalent of the kind of subsidized family publishing that was by the mid-1940s nearly obsolete? No publishing house can thrive for very long if it is coasting on the proceeds from its backlist. Were Pantheon in the position to supply its own sales and distribution force, surely it would have felt the belt-tightening that low profit margins, and the ire of booksellers, bring with them.

Here is where Schiffrin's Achilles' heel as publisher, and memoirist, are most evident. Schiffrin displays little concern for a reading public with interests different from his own or that of his small circle of advisers.

> The end of the Cold War has not had a beneficial intellectual influence on publishing or, indeed, on any of the other media. We have lost much of our curiosity about the communist world and the Third World, curiosity that once provided raw material for a great many important books. But we have seen the development of a new ideology, one that has replaced that of the Western democracies against the Soviet bloc. Belief in the market, faith in its ability to conquer everything, a willingness to surrender all other values to it—and even the belief that it represents a sort of consumer democracy—these things have become the hallmark of publishing.

Willing to concede that the country, and its book-buying habits, have changed, Schiffrin appears unwilling to adapt his business in any way, lest it appear as if he is capitulating to the heathens—be they his corporate overseers or faceless customers.

This idyll of quality publishing, in Schiffrin's estimation, ended as soon as the merciless searchlight of corporate avarice trained itself on his peaceable kingdom. In 1965, RCA-owned Random House decided to no longer credit Pantheon with the proceeds from its own backlist. In effect, Schiffrin lost his birthright: the Pantheon history that was his proudest accomplishment. A series of punishing cost-saving measures were ordered, all of them amounting to a kind of tithing for Pantheon's place in the Random House firmament. The environment for Pantheon grew more hostile with S. I. Newhouse's acquisition of Random House in the 1980s. After a proposed corporate restructuring that would have severely restricted Pantheon's output, Schiffrin and his staff quit en masse. Shortly thereafter, Schiffrin established the New Press, which, with its slim undergirding of financial support from various foundations, stands immune from its founder's industry-wide indictment.

> The lesson we have drawn is that, although some types of books are undeniably harder to publish with every passing year, the audiences are there, untapped, simply because no one has tried to reach them. It has taken a nonprofit structure to discover those readers. While many editors in commercial houses would doubtless be delighted to experiment as we have, they are forced to concentrate on a handful of books that will allow them to meet the economic expectations of corporate owners. Many editors who have been around long enough to remember the times before conglomerates keenly regret the decimation of thoughtful publishing.

Although Schiffrin's determination to continue to publish in his father's tradition is commendable, it appears as if his convictions are fueled more by an exquisite sense of privilege—the world of ideas contracting comfortably around his own ambitions—than a determination to respond to the financial realities

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of publishing. Though the yoke of profitability is both unsightly and uncomfortable, it is—even for a nonprofit publisher—a necessary condition for the existence of a publishing house and, therefore, the livelihood of the authors it employs.

JASON EPSTEIN, unlike André Schiffrin, was not to the publishing manner born. In a delightful, if sketchy, outline of how he came to choose it as a career, Epstein focuses on his experiences at Columbia, beginning with his 1945 freshman class. He describes the Columbia classroom, with a large number of classmates who had recently returned from the war, as the origin of his ambition:

> When I became a publisher it was my undergraduate encounter with books that I wanted to share with the world. I believed and still do that the democratic ideal is a permanent and inconclusive Socratic seminar in which we all learn from one another. The publisher's job is to supply the necessary readings.

The postwar generation of which Epstein was a part constituted the establishment of a new class of readers:

> The great expansion of college enrollments that followed WW II produced a classless generation of serious readers to whom both Anchor Books and The New York Review of Books were addressed. This generation marked a real split with the past. The GI Bill had democratized higher education and liberated it from its aristocratic tradition.

Where Schiffrin sees a mass of distracted readers, Epstein recognizes a nascent consumer population, goaded on by the desire for intellectual self-improvement to new educational and book-buying opportunities.

Epstein is credited with founding the Anchor series at Doubleday, yet another commercially successful packaging of literary classics and nonfiction in paperback. He left Doubleday after the house, citing an unfavorable read by the publisher's wife, refused to publish *Lolita*. Bennett Cerf quickly hired Epstein, who would remain at Random House for the rest of his career. Having understood fairly early that the business of books was one of limited monetary rewards, Epstein wisely struck a deal with Cerf that allowed him to devote time to other projects.

It is for these extra-curricular endeavors that Epstein is perhaps known best. Epstein has continually succeeded by taking advantage of one of the central oversights of the industry: a conservatism that used razor thin profit margins to excuse an almost complete lack of innovation. For example, his launch of the Library of America, an idea hatched with Edmund Wilson to create a domestic Pleiade, overcame twenty years of objections from the Modern Language Association, which was opposed to the idea of multiple definitive editions of the American classics.

Where Schiffrin characterizes the tightening of the industry as the consequence of shareholder and executive greed, Epstein—taking a cue from one of his authors, Jane Jacobs—locates the cause of the crisis in the demographic shift that created the largest population growth not in cities but in suburbs. Urban centers have historically been the home of the greatest variety of booksellers who helped to create a broad market for books. With this market dwindling, and with the strip-mall retail dictates of the suburbs taking over, a new kind of relationship between publishers and booksellers was forged. Suburban bookstores faced pressures to offset their steep rents with a swift turnover in inventory. Thus, the tyranny of the best-seller was born. The only way for suburban booksellers—as well as chain bookstores—to thrive was to reduce the shelf space dedicated to slow-moving inventory and devote more space to the best-sellers.

Epstein vividly describes what the decline of the independent booksellers has meant to publishers, likening it to "a kind of sensory deprivation, a loss of contact with the external world." In the absence of precise demographic or detailed sales information about customers, booksellers themselves are the audience for books. The dominance of the chain bookstore has wreaked a well-chronicled havoc on the business of publishing, concentrating purchasing decisions in the hands of a few corporate buyers, thereby submitting each publisher's seasonal lists to a de facto litmus test. The chain stores and Amazon.com constitute well over half of the market for books, with inde-

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pendents accounting for roughly a sixth.

The demise of the independents, while a subject of conversation and public lamentation in some circles, has quietly and successfully changed the way that people buy books. In what is now the second wave of chain store dominance in both urban and suburban areas, the issue of square footage to net profit, which Epstein describes as the single greatest threat to quality publishing, has lessened. Chain superstores are able to negotiate lower rents, using the sizable amount of foot traffic they command as leverage. The net effect of their dominance of the market is, ironically, the reproduction of one high-quality showroom for literature after another—each so amply stocked with front and backlist titles that many people mistake the local Barnes & Noble for a research library.

THE ZERO-SUM scenario of commerce vs. quality painted by both Schiffrin and Epstein constitutes a rarefied parlor game. Among the handful of boutique houses that Schiffrin cites as bulwarks against the coarsening of the book business, two of them (W.W. Norton and the Perseus Books Group) have lists comparable to those corporate conglomerates immune from Schiffrin's dismissal, including Harcourt Brace, Houghton Mifflin, and Metropolitan Books at Henry Holt. Schiffrin appears to anoint his independent favorites without acknowledging the resemblance—in the form of subsidized overhead, distribution, or the practically guaranteed cash flow that comes from textbook publishing—they bear to their corporate betters.

Corporate consolidation or not, the fact remains that today's reading public sometimes rewards good books, and, perhaps most important, there are enough books published so that the definition of a good book remains in question. Innovations in the way books are read (electronically) or printed (on demand) may free up—much like the original paperback imprints—space for the appearance of new writers and subjects and the enduring presence of older writers, but the core issue of the fight for the attention of potential readers will likely remain the same. In the near term, U.S. publishing is unlikely to operate dramatically differently, and it is unclear whether the cultural role occupied by Schiffrin and Epstein—the protean editor-publisher—will continue to exist after publishing, one of the last remaining holdouts of antiquated management techniques, incorporates some of the decentralized decision-making practices that have benefited other creative industries.

If you believe Schiffrin, the small but vital margin of quality publishing that we enjoy today may become even more endangered. If you believe Epstein, anything—including a change in the very way we buy books and how we read them—is possible. Between these two, in the crawl space where writers labor to keep producing the kinds of books that a few editors build their careers to publish, is the reality. ●

VANESSA MOBLEY is an editor at Basic Books.

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Street Smarts

Steve Fraser

ONE MARKET UNDER GOD:
EXTREME CAPITALISM, MARKET POPULISM,
AND THE END OF ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY
by Thomas Frank
Doubleday, 2000 414 pp $26

THIS IS THE story of a bizarre and, according to its narrator, victorious cultural counterrevolution. Thomas Frank calls it "market populism." The phrase captures a stunning reversal in the way many people think about the free market. Old-fashioned populism held that laissez-faire capitalism presented the gravest danger to freedom, democracy, equality, and the material well-being of most citizens. Market populism turns that skepticism inside out. It persuades us that the market is the gateway to universal liberation. Egalitarian beyond compare, the free market eviscerates every authoritarian instinct, every hierarchical institution, every form of elitist snobbery. It conducts a twenty-four-hour-a-day plebiscite on the people's preferences, an exquisitely more sensitive barometer of popular desire than the cumbersome and rickety apparatus of democratic political wrangling. Actually, market libbers argue, it is precisely those collectivist institutions, those legislative restraints, those ideological delusions standing outside the charmed circle of the marketplace—trade unions, government regulatory agencies, safety nets, codes of fair conduct, the leftovers of a smart-ass social engineering mentality, in a word, all the paraphernalia of the old populism—that short-circuit a full emancipation.

Here then is a counterrevolution that looks to the future, is not hung up on the past. Frank takes a certain pleasure in reciting "market populism's" transparent contradictions just to make its triumph that much more marvelous. Market populism champions choice, but leaves no room for doubt that the market is the only choice. It cherishes democracy, but is out of temper with every form of popular government or social movement with the chutzpah to challenge the market's omniscience. While the marketeers work up a Jacobin rage against each noxious sign of class pretension, they worship a pantheon of CEOs in an ascending order of cupidity. Inspired by the free-spirited, anything goes anarchy of the market unchained, dripping with contempt for the bureaucrat's iron cage, these avatars of free agency nonetheless live out their lives under a regime of great corporations as hierarchically put together as the Vatican. Full of reassurances that in the long run nothing works better than the market in leveling the playing field, market populism blesses unprecedented levels of income and wealth inequality, measuring progress by the growth in the earth's square acreage of billionaires.

Despite living in contradiction, market populism vanquishes its foes, Frank tells us, precisely because it has adopted the lingo of its putative opposition. It speaks the language of the disenfranchised and the rebellious. It marshals the emotions of the anti-elitist and anti-authoritarian. It conjures up the audacious urges of the creative artist and visionary scientist. And in a maddening piece of ideological larceny, it invokes that ultimate sanction—once the principal asset of the left—the stamp of historic inevitability. This portentous high concept of a "new order" is rolled out whenever other rationales fail to bite. Teamsters and turtles are not only reactionary, conniving myopically to deprive the world's poor of the fruits of global capitalism; they are hapless as well, doomed to become roadkill under the wheels of an irresistible historical juggernaut.

Frank, a witty, trenchant, and always lucid writer, tells this story well. His prose style might

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be described as the ironically oracular. He speaks as if from a great distance looking down on this planetary weirdness. This can suggest a fatalism about it all that Frank may or may not feel. It's hard to tell. A simmering passion for old-style economic democracy animates the book, yet Frank seems infatuated with the very hipness he mocks. While poking fun at gurus like Tom Peters for speaking in the first person plural, he sometimes lapses into that voice himself, leaving some ambiguity about whether market populism is to be considered a plot or a mass mania. Insofar as evidence for the triumph of market populism can be culled from the output of management theorists, media pundits, market philosophes, commercial promotions, advertising campaigns, public relations flaks, and the occasionally loquacious CEO, Frank makes his case. One can only admire his endurance in wading through the gaseous, if sometimes hilarious, meditations of people like George Gilder and Tom Peters; his patient and attentive listening to what must have been hundreds of clever and not so clever television commercials; his assiduous gathering of sometimes inane, sometimes strikingly laconic Internet communiqués.

All of this digging pays off, unearthing a river of aperçus and scathing insights that provoke thought. There's a brilliant riff on George Gilder as chief ideologue of the new class struggle, that is, the one that pits Entrepreneurial Man against the resentful world of old money, which conspires through its control of the media, universities, and the liberal foundations to get the poor to join in unholy alliance against the forces of creative destruction. A bon mot captures the fatuousness and empty sentimentality of the new "people's capitalism": "all Capra, no CIO." Just for the sneaky pleasure of it, one wants to thank Frank for ferreting out an ad like this one from Merrill Lynch: "Corporations like to refer to themselves as 'families.' Shouldn't it be the other way around?"; or for bringing to our attention cover stories like the one entitled "Free Agent Nation" (appearing in *Fast Company*, the sassiest of these market populist publications), which, topsy turvy, re-imagines the now casualized white-collar salartariat as brash, empowered, in-your-face folk not about to take any guff from their corporate employers.

Frank possesses a gimlet eye for the cultural and intellectual inversions that are part of the outrageous appeal of market fabulism. He shows how this fairy tale shamelessly appropriates the images of a venerated producer mythology, so that stockbrokers and bankers assume the roles "once played by such folks as tillers of the soil and builders of cars." The heroic new rich turn out to be not only cool, but gluttons for hard work. Seen through this looking-glass, the leisure class become the overworked, the working class, the malingering poor. Thanks to the courageous efforts of stock market "democrats" like Charles Schwab and Peter Lynch, and, above all, thanks to the liberating wonders of the Internet, the marble palaces on Wall Street are declared to have fallen at the hands of an insurgency as grass-rooted and militant as the civil rights or feminist movements.

The Street is a boulevard open to all, a veritable "socialism of the stock exchange." Generation X, Frank shows us, is sold the privatization of Social Security in the idiom of coolness; investing as the ultimate act of generational rebellion. Frank uses his favorite management Punchinello, Tom Peters, to let us in on just how crazy things can get. In the culminating, "extremist" phase of market populism, Peters, once the promoter of "excellence," has mutated into the Darth Vader of corporate death, a kind of market terrorist, a true believer that "destruction is cool," so cool he recommends that management create a new post, a CDO or "Chief Destruction Officer."

I COULD GO ON and on. Frank does, and that's a problem. The strength of the book is its scouring of the cultural landscape for each and every telltale sign of this new "populist" persuasion. That may also be its weakness. So many of these signs consist of infomercials and other effluvia, one is bound to wonder if anyone takes this all as seriously as Frank does. Management theorists and market planners no doubt exert influence, but they don't actually run corporations, and they skate perilously on the thin ice of public incredulity. Moreover, the book is redundant. Frank's mordant humor and acerbic voice freshen up each new illustration, but the message rarely varies. This was true as well of his first book, *The Conquest of Cool*;

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indeed, *One Market Under God* is a kind of reprise and elaboration of that book's central theme: in the interests of securing its cultural legitimacy, business, ministered to by an advertising industry in touch with the zeitgeist, assumes the countercultural position. Its drive for pelf and power is cloaked in the dream coat of insurrectionary cool; youthful, soulful, and truth-telling, it is the sworn enemy of pretense, bureaucracy, hypocrisy, and elitism, at war with every vestige of social conformity. What happens, to this reader at least, is not merely that one tires of the echo. All this recycling flattens the analysis, leaving *One Market Under God* a more one-dimensional book than it should be.

FRANK IS A historian as well as a cultural critic. And a fair portion of his book is devoted to past business practice and theory. Yet it elides a range of vital questions. To begin with, the book's premise is itself worth interrogating. If the market rules, as Frank persuasively tells us it does, then why all the hullabaloo, why this elaborate charade of corporate self-repudiation? If all lingering opposition—trade unionism, New Dealism, and so on—pretty much threw in the towel during the Reagan eighties, as Frank—I think rightly—claims, from where then derived the urge driving the market populist counter-revolution of the nineties? Conversely and oddly, the book includes only the most abbreviated allusions to what might be dubbed "the Seattle syndrome." As the recent escalation of violence in Genoa reminds us, the last half dozen years are witness to the largest, most diverse, and militant anticorporate social movement in more than fifty years. Which is to say, parenthetically, that the sixties, whose esprit Frank sometimes carelessly merges with the thirties, were far more preoccupied with the transgressions of the liberal state than with the world of business per se. The omission is all the more stunning once one takes note that this anticorporate uprising climaxed in the late nineties, precisely when Frank registers the triumphant completion of market populism's long march through the corridors of power. It's not that there's no possible explanation for this congruent with Frank's schemata, only that he doesn't offer one.

One reason may be the way Frank conflates the free market and the corporation, as if they were stand-ins for each other. Historically of course this has not always been so. The modern corporation, invented during the age of J.P. Morgan, was designed to circumvent the free market, to stay clear of the treacherous shoals of laissez-faire capitalism that had set off a series of acute economic as well as political and social crises throughout the late nineteenth century. The corporate regime that replaced it, while dedicated to the defense of private property, had no patience with the unpredictable Donnybrook of free-for-all competition. This "Morgan dispensation" was itself challenged on many fronts, including by a business milieu that resented being shut out of an increasingly concentrated and coagulating economy.

A fair amount of what Frank applauds as genuine economic democracy, that is, the public oversight and regulation of the "free market," arose out of what might be crudely characterized as the war between new money and old. The antitrust movement, the "money trust" investigations of 1913, the Pecora hearings of the early thirties, Louis Brandeis's war on railroad monopolies, New Deal-era securities and banking legislation, the attack on the public utility holding company, Keynesian fiscal policy, even the justly ridiculed Sherman antitrust act (which nonetheless Bill Gates is now compelled to wrestle with) drew inspiration and energy from various sources. But segments of the business community were always prominent among them. Taking the longer view, it is nearly impossible to exaggerate the antiquity and stature of Entrepreneurial Man within the American public imagination. A century and a half before anyone dreamed up market populism, he was there at the birth of the movement for "free soil, free labor, free men" and other allied struggles for economic democracy. It's hardly necessary to genuflect in gratitude to recognize that the "business community" frequently fails to act communally, that its multiple fissures generate diverging tendencies, some more and some less friendly to the unrestricted free market.

For Frank, however, the historic war between "new money" and "old money" is not to

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be taken seriously. Business is one and indivisible. It has with single-minded determination yearned to break free. Its unwavering resistance to each and every form of state regulation has at long last been rewarded. Now it has entered the Elysian fields of the free market and carried the rest of us along with it. That is all ye know and all ye need to know.

Coming of intellectual age under Reagan, as Frank did, he might think that the world conforms to this more stripped-down version of free market revanchism. But shrink-wrapping the argument like this leaves out a lot. Take politics. *One Market Under God* is a story of counterrevolution with very little politics in it, either Seattle style or elite style, or for that matter, boring old mass-electoral style. Groping in the murk of political horse-trading and coalition building might muddy up the otherwise pristine purity of the market populist party line. If, as Frank would likely agree, the Republican Party has for twenty years functioned as the principal political vessel of market populist counterrevolution, how account for a leadership of the Party of Cool consisting of Dick Cheney, Tom DeLay, and Dick Armey, about as unhip a group of suits as one might conjure.

THE PROBLEM really is to explain the cohabitation of cultural conservatism with free market fanaticism. But here Frank is caught in a bind. He wants to simplify matters by declaring cultural conservatism over and done with, having over-reached itself in the Clinton impeachment fiasco. But of course, the current agonizing within the Republican Party over stem cell research is only one of a dozen indications that the cultural right is alive and well and still throwing its weight around. And then on top of that some of them turn out to be, like Dick Cheney, corporate heavyweights of precisely the sort market populists disdain. Meanwhile, at the very millennial moment when market populism had accomplished, as Frank tells the story, a total mindfucking of the citizenry, voters went to the polls and elected Al Gore, hardly a champion of economic democracy to be sure, but not the reincarnation of Ayn Rand either. Every day brings fresh news of the dissolution of George W. Bush's fragile consensus. Its naked corporate pimping is sometimes hard to swallow even for politically savvy members of the Party of Cool.

Street politics are even more wildly out of sync. While relations between teamsters and turtles have chilled, the larger fact of the matter is that the labor movement, long a nesting ground for cultural conservatism, has opened itself up to the social and cultural transgressiveness it once found repugnant. How this must madden corporate hipsters who thought they acquired the franchise to the counterculture, only to discover it staring at them from the other side of the barricades.

Beneath its flashy exterior, *One Market Under God* is a meditation on the making of a ruling class as an act of ideological cohesion and hegemony. It is often suggestive in this regard. There's no question, for example, that mutual funds, pension funds, and the Internet help assemble a certain middle-class following for the rule of Wall Street, one whose true size, however, is grossly exaggerated, as Frank notes. Today, market populism is Wall Street driven, a vision made of pure money, all ego (no superego), and ideological hallucination. But these are hardly the ingredients of political and social integration and stability. To defend its own self-interest as a ruling class, a ruling class must be able to transcend its own self-interest. In times of political and social equipose, it may be possible to sustain the illusion to the contrary: to rule the nation as if it were a collection of oil companies. Not for long, however, not in a finely reticulated international political economy. Standing silently backstage of all the market populist histrionics, the great institutions continue to deploy their power—the mighty corporations, the implacable Wall Street bankers (news of their reported eclipse having been recently retracted), the imperious headquarters of international finance. They endure. Market populism, as a form of cultural narcissism, seems, on the contrary, inherently more fissionable, less a counterrevolution than a breakdown in the social and cultural reproduction of a ruling class. ●

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Radical Algebra: Who Figures in the Equations?

Leo Casey

RADICAL EQUATIONS:
MATH LITERACY AND CIVIL RIGHTS
by Robert P. Moses with E. Charles E. Cobb, Jr.
Beacon Press, 2001 192 pp. $21

IS MATH EDUCATION today's civil rights struggle? Are children in inner-city and poor rural schools the dispossessed sharecroppers of our age? Does a student who learns algebra in the middle school years, like a sharecropper who registered to vote for the first time in the 1960s, then possess the means to reach the "promised land" of full citizenship? In *Radical Equations*, Bob Moses, the legendary organizer of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) Mississippi Freedom Summer and voter registration drives, joins with a former SNCC colleague, Charles Cobb, to raise these questions and to make a powerful argument that the answer is yes.

Radical Equations consists of two distinct, but related, narratives. The first is the story of Moses's participation in the civil rights movement and the second is the tale of how he organized the Algebra Project, employing the lessons he had drawn from his civil rights movement experiences. The account of the civil rights movement highlights Moses's vision of grassroots organizing, a process in which ordinary men and women engage the issues that are important to their community and, in so doing, empower themselves, developing into leaders of a democratic, participatory mobilization. It is this vision that Moses brings to his work on the Algebra Project, a program to teach algebra to middle school students in inner-city and poor rural schools. (For an overview of the Algebra Project, visit www.algebra.org.) Begun in 1982, the program is now in place in more than twenty sites in thirteen states.

At first glance, there seems to be a world of difference between organizing people to vote—the most basic of citizenship rights—and organizing young adolescents to master algebra. But Moses makes a persuasive argument that in a knowledge-based economy, young people who are not literate and numerate are denied access to productive work and to meaningful participation in society. Disproportionately poor and of color, these students end up in a sharecropper-like status of poverty, deprivation, and marginality. Algebra, according to Moses, is a "gate keeper" course: those who master it in the middle school years are on a college track, those who do not are fortunate if they complete high school. Algebra, like voting rights in the 1960s, is the key to full citizenship.

Unfortunately, *Radical Equations* does not examine the ways in which literacy acquisition has always been a central focus of American struggles for emancipation and empowerment. This is true not only for the African-American freedom struggle, starting with the resistance to laws that prohibited enslaved men and women from learning how to read and write, but for the trade union and feminist movements as well. Except for a passing mention of the "freedom schools" of the civil rights movement, this history and its lessons are neither investigated nor evaluated.

Moses also accepts too easily the notion that the need for literacy and civics education has largely been met, and that numeracy is the problem now confronting poor children. But even if Moses goes too far in the direction of an exclusive focus on numeracy in the middle school years, he has good reason for stressing it. While American students rank near the top in international comparisons of literacy skills, they are more mediocre on numeracy and science skills, and their standing declines dra-

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matically during the middle school years. In general, the middle school grades are the most troubled and neglected years of K-12 American education, and mathematics instruction at this level is particularly poor. Not enough teachers in these early grades have a solid background in mathematics, and mathematics education as a field has been resistant to the introduction of student-centered, "hands-on" pedagogical methods that actively engage students with the subject matter. What is true of the country as a whole is even more striking with respect to schools serving the poor.

The Algebra Project connects the real life experiences of the students with the specialized language of mathematics. Mathematics then becomes a method of communication, problem solving, and reasoning. In this process, Moses draws upon both the educational philosophies of John Dewey and Jean Piaget, on the one hand, and the analytical philosophy of mathematics developed by Moses's late Harvard professor W. V. O. Quine, on the other. These theories are translated into learning exercises in which students use African drumming and musical rhythms or cooking recipes to explore concepts such as ratio and proportion. Trips on subways become the basis for students to grasp concepts of relative position and direction. To the dismay of more conservative observers, critical thinking about power relations and the history of the civil rights movement are integrated into the learning of algebra.

Critics on the left such as Meta Mendel Reyes (in *Reclaiming Democracy*) complain that Moses has surrendered his vision of participatory democracy for efforts that seek to improve the lives of individuals without challenging fundamental power relations. This criticism ignores the fact that the Algebra Project organizes young people around their educational needs. For example, students address issues such as how to overcome the anti-intellectual youth culture that treats academic success as the sign of being a "nerd" and "acting white." Students are also encouraged to serve as mentors for their younger compatriots, with math literacy workers modeled after the civil rights workers of an older generation. Most important, some young people connected to the Algebra Project are organizing to demand quality education.

But there are questions regarding the approach taken by the Algebra Project to organizing parents and teachers. The entire project began with Moses's own experience as a parent working with his oldest daughter on her mathematics. Aside from a mention of the role of Cambridge parents at the very start of the Algebra Project twenty years ago, however, parents simply do not appear as key actors in *Radical Equations*, either as partners in their children's learning or as a force for change in education.

By contrast, teachers do appear in *Radical Equations*, but with contradictory messages concerning their role in the Algebra Project. Moses himself is a teachers' teacher. He commutes to Mississippi every week to spend three days in the classroom, teaching mathematics to adolescents, where he roots the continuing development of the project's pedagogy, model lessons, and curricular interventions in concrete educational experience. No other leader in educational change efforts is so grounded in the world of the classroom. Exemplary teachers, such as Mary Lou Mehrling (the teacher of Moses's daughter) and Lynne Godfrey (who piloted the original Algebra Project curriculum), figure prominently in the narrative. But teachers as a collective political force never appear, despite the fact that they are the Algebra Project's most natural political allies. The only mention of local teacher unions occurs when one teacher threatens to file a grievance in order to avoid teaching an Algebra Project class. And while Moses notes that there is a strong convergence between the work of the Algebra Project and the standards, methods, and academic agenda of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, he gives no evidence of any working relationship between the two organizations.

Throughout *Radical Equations* the authors imply that teachers who resist participation in their program do so out of a fear of change, a fear of learning how to teach in new ways. No one should discount the role that fear of change plays in thwarting school reform efforts, but it is not the only problem. Teachers are often

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more cynical about, than fearful of, proposed changes. Most experienced teachers have been through cycle after cycle of superficial change projects, each imposed from the top without any meaningful teacher input and without the provision of real professional development or supporting resources; these "change" edicts appear as "flavors of the month" that have produced a great deal of paper and bureaucratic work but very little in the way of educational progress. The educational powers that be are constantly sending the message that it is standardized test results—not teaching and learning—that constitute the bottom line for schools. The challenge that the Algebra Project and other authentic school reform efforts face is convincing classroom teachers that they are truly useful.

How teachers receive a classroom reform effort such as the Algebra Project depends in large part upon the way it is presented to them. Does it come as yet another top-down mandate from the district, the board, the superintendent, or the principal? Or is it a joint venture with organized teacher involvement and avenues for teacher participation in decision making? Is it presented as the finished product of non-teacher "experts"—usually education school academics—who have a prepackaged program that teachers must be trained in and follow? Or is it a partnership effort with teachers that respects and develops their professional knowledge and abilities and seeks their ongoing input? Is this another "here today, gone tomorrow" program? Or are the people connected to it committed to digging in for the long haul?

Reading *Radical Equations* from the perspective of the classroom teacher, one finds mixed answers to these questions. The passionate devotion of Moses to the classroom is combined with a top-down model of teacher training. The celebration of individual teachers, such as Mehrling and Godfrey, is combined with descriptions of programs that collapsed for lack of board and administrative support, or because a key administrator left (a common occurrence in urban school districts). This suggests that the Algebra Project at these sites relied too much on an initiative from the top and never took deep root among the teachers and parents in the schools.

The Algebra Project needs to understand teachers. When teachers are struggling to provide quality education in the face of overcrowded classrooms, poorly maintained buildings, and a lack of books and learning materials, they are sure to resist when the same administrators who won't help on a day-to-day basis send them to a two-day seminar where they are told that their attitudes are the fundamental problem.

By raising these difficult questions, I am holding Moses, the Algebra Project, and *Radical Equations* to a high standard. But the ability to handle these issues will determine whether progressive school reform will take root and grow. Precisely because the Algebra Project shows such promise in confronting the "savage inequalities" of American education, precisely because it offers us hope, we must hold it to high standards. After all, if all middle school students can learn algebra, shouldn't we be able to learn how to make school work for them? ●

Leo Casey taught for fifteen years in an inner-city high school in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, N.Y. He is now special representative for high schools at the United Federation of Teachers.

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IT'S AN AXIOM that writing doesn't pay the rent, so after graduating from college with a degree in English, I took a part-time job with a company called The Princeton Review, preparing high school students to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test. The Princeton Review and Kaplan are the two largest such companies in the country, and I earn more than $20 per hour—good money, even in New York City.

This new job caused me no small amount of consternation. How could I go against my egalitarian principles and perpetuate the influence of money in ensuring high test scores and therefore a better chance at a good education? Should I take a principled stand and not work there? My landlord made the choice for me, and I have gained many things from my experience: a healthy respect for teenagers, concern for America's school system, and an awareness of the vast inadequacies involved in attempting to quantify "aptitude."

Most of the kids are intelligent and polite, although some of them are shockingly lacking in basic skills. I hope that I both helped them get into better colleges and showed them that a superficial measurement like the SAT isn't what is really important in life.

The skills I teach aren't rocket science. Rather, they are the processes involved in problem solving and logic broken down step-by-step and made concrete. Concepts like process of elimination, working backward, and isolating relevant clues are useful in all walks of life. When I lose my keys, need to fix a drip, or have to install a computer program, I unconsciously use many of these same strategies. Street smarts can get you a lot of places book smarts can't, even on the SAT.

On the verbal section, one of our most popular and fun techniques involves answering questions about narrative passages without actually reading the passages. Get enough exposure to the way the test works, and you can pick out the most reasonable answer at least half the time without having the slightest idea what the article is about. Taking a few sample tests usually raises scores considerably, even without teacher involvement. It's a shame when kids go into the test with no preparation, totally stressed out, perform below their expectations, and consign themselves to eternal second-class status—which is what placing such importance on one number encourages.

It still rankles me that upper-middle-class kids have one more advantage over others in the fierce competition for limited slots at top schools, in addition to better teachers, facilities, and community support. Our course costs almost a thousand dollars, well worth the price if it helps a middling student get more financial aid or into a better college. A name-brand school brings many advantages. For once impoverished minority students aren't the main losers—though they certainly face other challenges—as colleges desperate for "well-balanced" classes heavily recruit students of underrepresented socioeconomic status. Rather, they are the lower-middle-class students, stuck in dreary suburbs, who struggle to acquire Dickensian vocabulary in an MTV world. Part of a culture that belittles intellectual achievement in favor of fifteen minutes of fame, they have yet another opportunity to fail. Presumably many of the 50 percent of Americans who don't vote didn't care about school either.

More needs to be done to get all children involved. Apathy is a much greater enemy than stupidity. Ask tutors and they'll unanimously tell you that they would rather have a student eagerly working to maximize his or her potential than a smart kid who doesn't care.

However, every student, without exception, displays at least a glimmer of intellectual curiosity and ability at some time. My job is to coax that along as much as possible. My favorite practice passage is about the British painter J.M.W. Turner. A student will invariably ask about him, and I hope that my lyrical, quasi-desperate descriptions of his awe-inspiring paintings inspire a museum visit or two, because that will last a lot longer than any test score.

ANDREW FELTON

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